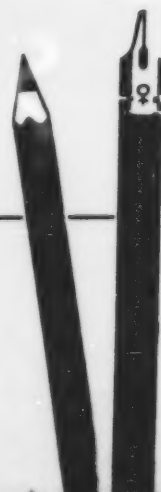


# WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY: A READING GUIDE

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## **WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY: A READING GUIDE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This guide to readings on women and the economy contains a review of literature that economic project members of the Women's Research Centre have found useful. The content of this guide reflects some of the topics we have focussed on over the past several years, including:

- clarifying our understanding and analysis of the sexual division of labour and its impact on women especially vis a vis their relationship to the economy.
- the impact of government cutbacks and "restraint" programs on women and families.
- the influence of right wing politics on women and the family, and on provincial, federal and private sector policies relating to women and families.
- developing an analysis that does not separate "socio" from "economic" and women and families from the rest of the world.
- encouraging and developing further understanding of how women work—in the home, the family, the community and the paid labour force.

The focus of this guide is to give you a "snapshot" of the contents of this literature so you can more easily decide which books and studies might be useful for you/your group to read and discuss, and why. Key findings or conclusions developed by the author(s) are highlighted throughout.

The guide is divided into several categories:

1. Economic analyses with a focus on the sexual division of labour and its implications for the economy and for women.
2. Descriptions and impacts of government cutback and restraint policies.
3. Theories, policies and practices of right wing politics as they relate to women.
4. Recent community based research on women and local economies conducted by women.
5. Government perspectives on women and the economy.
6. Different ways of thinking about the economy.

The books in this guide have been chosen because their perspectives provide a direction for discussion and add to the development of an analysis of women's role in the economy. Nearly all of the material reviewed is canadian. Several american titles relate to right wing political analysis and the impact of cutbacks and one british author discusses the sexual division of labour.

Obviously, there are more books and studies on these topics—we certainly did

not intend to review them all. We would appreciate receiving references to additional materials that readers find useful.

### **ECONOMIC ANALYSES WITH A FOCUS ON THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY AND FOR WOMEN**

Armstrong, Pat. *Labour Pains, Women's Work In Crisis*. Toronto: the Women's Educational Press, 1984. 273 pages, paperback.

This is an invaluable book to anyone concerned about women's relationship to the economy (from their position within the home and within the paid labour force) and the impact of the sexual division of labour on women, men, and their work.

The book begins with descriptions and critiques of various theoretical approaches used over time to explain women and work, with Armstrong making a clear case for a critical understanding of the sexual division of labour. She goes on to describe women's involvement in the labour force from World War II to 1985.

In chapter four she makes what we found to be a very useful analysis of the present economic crises and its varying impact on the labour force work of men and women. Her careful review of statistical information allows us to look at all areas of the Canadian economy—from primary industries to utilities, trade, sales, the private sector and see what the impact of the immediate crisis (and technological change) is, who's losing the jobs and to whom, and who's getting full or part time work. Armstrong also offers an analysis of what will happen in each job sector with potential economic recovery.

Overall, she concludes that

the labour force remains highly segregated... that many women were protected from the most obvious consequences of the economic crisis. However, more of the women who took jobs found only part-time work, and many of those who kept their part-time jobs had their pay reduced. Male unemployment has been more visible because it has happened in large centres to large numbers of full-time workers at the same time. Women's unemployment has been less obvious because unemployed women are more scattered over a range of occupations and are less concentrated in large goods-producing industries, because they are more likely to drop out of the labour force and the statistics, and because the crisis is more likely to result, at least initially, in underemployment in part-time jobs with reduced hours of work.

Chapter five describes the impact of economic crises on household labour as well as clarifying the overlap between households and the formal economy. Armstrong argues that women's work "will increase as a consequence of and in response to economic conditions... and that alternatives to wage labour and state services are now severely limited for women as well as for men... in turn placing restrictions on the formal economy and on state cutbacks."

Part of the response to economic crisis by the state (government) is to increase job creation, introduce cutbacks in social services (which in turn increases women's

voluntary and part time work) and promote microtechnology. Chapters six and seven of Armstrong's book examines the consequences of these responses.

While Armstrong does not outline specific solutions to the impact of the economic crisis on women, her book de-mystifies the workings of the economy and gives us an understanding of why and how women's labour force and domestic work is different from that of men. The analyses and descriptions offer women a way into the economic discussions. This book must be read by anyone concerned about women and their relationship to the Canadian economy.

Luxton, Meg. *More Than a Labour of Love—Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home*. Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1980. 260 pages, paperback.

The author states she had two goals for this study, "I wanted to locate domestic labour within the development of industrial capitalism in North America to show how it has changed throughout the period. I also wanted to illustrate the actual work process as women experience it to reveal the impact of those changes on women's lives... by placing the specific personal experiences of individual women in a larger social and economic framework, the book argues that women's work in the home is one of the most important and necessary labour processes of industrial capitalist society."

Luxton chose the northern Manitoba resource community of Flin Flon for her study (she lived in the town for 14 months) hence we also get a picture of what single industry towns are like for the women who live there. She points out that a rigid sexual division of labour exists within the community because of the underdevelopment of secondary industry and social services and a "homogeneity of domestic labour that cuts across cultural, ethnic and personal differences" exists because the city is small, isolated, most men are employees of the Company earning similar incomes."

After giving an overview of the study and description of Flin-Flon, Luxton divides the rest of the book into five chapters. Women's situation in marriage is described in "Wives and Husbands," the work of mothering in "Mothers and Children," housework in "Housewives and Housework," household management in "Making Ends Meet." In the final chapter entitled "Bread and Roses" she describes how community, union and women's issues provide a way for women to act on their concerns and support one another.

The one hundred interviews given by the women of Flin Flon are well used by Luxton in building an analysis and providing descriptions of women's work. The interview data is made available to the reader with much comment and references to other research and literature and the women's words, when quoted, are powerful and revealing.

Rogers, Barbara. *The Domestication of Women, Discrimination in Developing Societies*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1980. 193 pages, paperback.

Although this book deals with the situation of women in developing countries it should be required reading for people interested in understanding women's relation to the economy in any country.

Rogers begins her chapter on "Women and men: the division of labour" by pointing

out that sex is a physical distinction; gender is social and cultural and the actual pattern of female and male activities "will be devised by each society according to its beliefs about the reproductive functions of the sexes." She describes what she sees as a particular (and relatively modern) feature of western male ideology—the emphasis on the exclusive role of the biological mother in nurturing infants and children—closely linked with the identification of women's place as the domestic sphere even if they take a second salaried job outside the home. She states this new division of labour "is both cause and effect of the virtual monopoly by men of the important positions in the socio-economic hierarchy and their associated control of the main institutions of modern society..."

Rogers goes on to state that women are so thoroughly excluded from the analysis of development researchers and planners that they can "convincingly express surprise that they should be accused of practicing discrimination against them."

She describes how the recent supposed non-discriminatory thrusts of development planners (operating with a western male perspective) actually serve to further oppress women with their insistence that women remain in the domestic sphere yet just as the economists continue to omit the work of canadian women from the GNP, developers in the third world fail to measure the unpaid family labour that women do. Rogers argues that women do not have to be incorporated into development—they are already doing most of the work.

#### DESCRIPTIONS AND IMPACTS OF GOVERNMENT CUTBACK AND RESTRAINT POLICIES.

Women for Economic Survival, University of Victoria, Extension Division. *Women and Economic Hard Times*, University of Victoria, 1984, 66 pages, paperback. (Available from Women's Programs, Division of University Extension, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700, Victoria, V8W 2Y2, \$2.00)

As noted in its introduction, this handbook is a record of many women's experiences of the economic recession—it is not an analysis of poverty or unemployment and their effects on women. Questionnaires and interviews with women living on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands enables this document to give a picture of women's experiences over a three-year period up to the mid-summer of 1984—recent recession years in British Columbia.

The handbook details, with many actual quotes from the interviews, the problems women encounter with jobs, food, health, personal relationships, welfare, housing, children, and so on. The women also describe how they get by, and they give lots of personal advice to others in similar situations. A range of viewpoints and perspectives are expressed.

The value of this handbook lies in these first hand descriptions of women's lives and work in economic hard times.

Women for Economic Survival, Community Council of Greater Victoria. *Women, Poverty and Public Policy*. Community Council of Greater Victoria, November

1985. 68 pages, paperback. (available from above organization, 1035 Pandora, Victoria V8V 3P6, for \$3)

This report is a follow-up to *Women and Economic Hard Times* developed out of a desire to critically review the content and impact of public income security policy with respect to women. It does this critical review well, combining description and analysis in a readable style that should prove useful to others concerned about the economics of women and poverty.

The first part of the publication reviews the literature on women and poverty, defines key terms (such as poverty, income security) and answers the question "why are women poor?" The figures clearly indicate that the income security programs in place, together with existing social support services, have not been able to bridge the poverty gap for all women.

Part two evaluates public policy, procedures and practices with regard to low-income women and recommends changes. Women's experience with federal Unemployment Insurance and provincial social assistance programs are focussed on through the use of questionnaires and interviews with women and personnel working in relevant social agencies.

The authors point out that women, in particular, run into difficulties with the UI system because it is based on outmoded assumptions about work, wages and the job market. Interviewees felt it was much more geared towards male employment patterns. The UI-CEC system appears unable to meet changing labour market conditions, and in particular, employment and retraining opportunities for women are grossly inadequate.

They note four key problems with income security policy—"that benefits for women on UI or social assistance are too low, that women relying on these income security programs lack basic rights, that additional benefits appear to be granted in an inconsistent manner, and that various aspects of the income security programs constitute disincentives to work."

Planning of future policy should include the detailed research and evaluation of individual income security programs, an analysis of the relationship among all federal and provincial programs for cracks in the social safety net, the development of an improved communication system between policy-makers, clients and professionals in order to disseminate new information and provide feedback on the effectiveness of new policies.

Lord, Stella. "Women's Rights: an Impediment to Recovery?" in *The New Reality, the Politics of Restraint in British Columbia*, eds. Magnusson, Carroll, Doyle, Langer, Walker. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984. 311 pages, paperback.

This book is part of an ongoing program of research and education concerning BC public policy conducted by the Committee on Alternatives for British Columbia, operating out of the University of Victoria. The book chronologizes and analyzes the "restraint" measures brought in by the Social Credit government during 1983 and 1984.

The Lord article, the only one specific to women in the book, outlines the potential impacts of cutbacks on women—specifically in the area of human rights, public sector wage controls, education and social services.

Lord poses the question "It is tempting to ask to what degree the government

is aware of the effects of its policies on women. Are these policies symptomatic of a government which does not understand the position of most women in our society, or is it a conscious attempt to undermine progress on women's equality?" She concludes by stating "there is some evidence that such a regression may be the ideological and political preference of the Social Credit government... it is an agenda for change in which women's struggle for equality is viewed as a political impediment to 'recovery'."

B.C. Government Employees Union. *A Promise Broken, the Effects of 'Restraint' on the Delivery of Social Services in British Columbia, BCGEU, 1985*. 80 pages, paper report. (Available from BCGEU, 4911 Canada Way, Burnaby BC V5G 3W3)

From the administration of a social services restraint questionnaire, and with documentation of statistics on numbers of social service staff laid off or fired, the BCGEU describes, from the perspective of its workers, a picture of their work and how it has changed since the service cutbacks were first introduced.

Services discussed in this report include social work, (elimination of Family Support Worker positions), transition house, (impact of contracting out) services to the mentally and physically handicapped (de-institutionalization) and the food bank (utilization of a community resource to replace MHR food voucher distribution).

High job-related stress levels were reported by many respondents—81% of those surveyed said this stress had increased since 1983. Typical stress causes include decreased staff levels, increase in workload (be it paper or people), and concern about quality and amount of primary and support services offered. There was particular concern expressed for the safety of physically and sexually abused children, battered women, and institutionalized handicapped people.

The report concludes that the B.C. government's restraint program is a political tool rather than an economic measure, especially given the fact that many of the eliminated programs and policies are demonstrably cost effective (such as the Family Support Workers Program). It encourages BCGEU workers to play an advocacy role and push for a stop to "downsizing" in the public service.

Coalition on Women and the Budget. *Inequality of Sacrifice: the Impact of the Reagan Budget on Women, 1983*. Paper report, 73 pages. (Available from National Women's Law Centre, 1751 N Street, NW, Washington DC, \$2)

Prepared by an ad hoc coalition consisting of 40 women's, education, religious and labour organizations, this analysis of Reagan's 1984 budget clarifies a pattern shown by the American administration—that women, especially poor women, were having to shoulder a disproportionate share of the country's economic burden. The writers claim that the effects of such budgets "can no longer charitably be seen as unintended consequences of budgetary actions."

The report impressively outlines the impact of recent Reagan budgets on women in families, girls and young women, women and the workforce and older women. Topics covered within these headings vary slightly, but usually include human resources, health and nutrition, income and jobs, and education.

The report concludes by asking "for an economic program which focuses resources

on building the nation's entire infrastructure—not just its buildings, highways and pipelines. We believe that the human infrastructure—the lives of our people and their families must be our first priority.” They claim that women are willing to sacrifice for their country but the burden of sacrifice must be equally shared.

The material contained in this report is valuable not only because it is a very visible documentation of women's economic situation, but because it is yet another piece of the puzzle of right wing politics, and because it offers an agenda for action at national and local levels.

Lytle, Clive; Errington, Gene; Rice, David. *There'll Come a Time... Report of the Public Commission on Social and Community Service Cutbacks*, B.C. Federation of Labour, B.C. Teacher's Federation, Hospital Employees Union, 1982.

This report was the first to document the impacts of budgetary cutbacks in British Columbia. Organised by the groups mentioned above shortly after the government introduced its “restraint” program, the Public Commission's mandate was three-fold—to examine the delivery of health, education and municipal services, to pay special attention to the impact of spending restraints on senior citizens, young people, women, minorities and families, and to report on the impact of the restraint program on levels of employment, the quality of public service provided and the level of service.

The report, written after the commission heard over 200 briefs during held public hearings in 11 communities throughout B.C., including Vancouver, describes impacts of the time and predicts impacts that have largely come true since the report was written. Four areas are covered—health care, education, municipal services and impact of cutbacks on particular groups.

In health care—the first of the service areas to be drastically cut back, the report offers descriptions of the impact of hospital bed closures, staff layoffs in extended and long-term care and cutbacks in homemaker care services. The Commission concludes that the government's lack of analysis of cost factors, lack of evaluation of service delivery and lack of consultation with appropriate groups meant the arbitrary cutbacks are “harmful, unjustified... the approach taken is a disincentive to efficiency.”

School Boards, teachers and parents expressed grave concern over the passage of the Education (Interim) Finance Act in early 1982, in which the powers of the local school board to set and spend their budgets was drastically changed—a major move towards centralization of power in Victoria. This report documents those concerns, as well as describing professional and lay people's thoughts about the cutbacks in services for learning enrichment, special needs children, and post-secondary education.

In their conclusions the Commission comments that the cutbacks “were not based on any rational analytical determination that costs could be safely reduced, but apparently on a rejection of the importance of education, or rejection of the principle of equal access and opportunity with respect to education, or based on hostility to those entrusted with responsibility for operating our education system.”

Municipal services cutbacks reflect concern about public safety and community life. The impact of cutbacks on particular groups includes comments about additional stress on families, emotional and abuse problems with children, loss of employment and

specific services for women, less care available for the elderly, fewer services relating to the special needs of Native people, immigrants and disabled persons.

The overall recommendations stand as a model of how to develop a "sensible, planned approach to determining the financial requirements for the maintenance of a satisfactory level of health, education and social services in British Columbia." They include an immediate and a general plan of action for the provincial government and a program of action for labour, professional and other community organizations.

This publication is perhaps more valuable now, in retrospect, than when it was first published in that it provides us with a first measure of impact of cutbacks, and its analysis and recommendations still stand, despite four subsequent years of continued cutbacks.

Marchak, Patricia. "The Ideology of Restraint," *Perception Magazine*, Vol 7, No. 5, May/August 1984.

This article was first delivered by Marchak as a speech to a Conference of Concerned Academics at the University of British Columbia and was subsequently revised and delivered as a lecture to a session sponsored by the B.C. ad hoc coalition of Women Against the Budget. Unfortunately this version is shorter than either of the other two.

Marchak's analysis is especially useful because with it she unravels the meanings of words such as restraint, incentives, downsizing, and fiscal crisis as they are presently used by B.C.'s Social Credit government. She makes it clear that much of the "restraint" package is "simply an attempt to displace the blame (for the recession) onto workers and welfare recipients" when in fact the recession is caused by an underlying change in the world economy and the choices the Bennett government made (or didn't make) to deal with that larger sphere.

She also notes, briefly but succinctly, how the cutbacks in government services and employment, and "privatization" have particularly severe effects on women.

Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto. *Caring for Profit—the Commercialization of Human Services in Ontario, 1984*. Paper report, 112 pages. (Available from the above organization at 185 Bloor Street East, Toronto, M4W 3J3, \$10)

This detailed study began with the assumption that decisions about the financing and delivery of human services should be based on the needs of people requiring service. They state that the trend toward privatization and commercialization raises two important questions which appear to challenge that assumption, and those questions are:

1. What is the impact of privatization and commercialization on the government's capacity, legitimacy and willingness to play an active and positive role in meeting human needs?
2. Is there an inherent tension between human service delivery and the profit-making goal of commercial enterprise which creates a potential for a lowering of quality of service, conflicts of interest and inadequate accountability?

They recommend a moratorium on commercialization of human services until an open and public policy review has been undertaken to provide answers to a number of

questions, including a definition of commercial service provision, the criteria for determining the provision of commercial services in particular programs, the introduction and enforcement of clear and measurable standards of quality of service.

This study is useful to women in present economic discussions because of their paid and unpaid work in delivering human services. As Pat Marchak said in her paper on the Ideology of Restraint, "Privatization has two quite different meanings: one meaning is more profit for private capital; the other is more domestic and voluntary work for women."

Garneau, Lorraine. *Discussion of the Federal Government's Proposals Regarding Canada's Economic Situation and Social Programs*. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1985. paper, 40 pages. (Available from CACSW, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R5)

Produced in response to four papers presented by the federal government over the winter of 1984 (Canada's economic situation, economic renewal, budget restraints and social program reform), this research provides a reference document for women's groups and serves as a statement of policy on the part of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women on these issues.

The paper is written in a very readable descriptive manner, with definitions of terms (such as "universality", "social security," "tax credit," etc.), and a useful historical review of the development of social security in Canada.

The research clearly points out that the increase in the State's expenses is a consequence of economic slowdown and stagnation but it did not cause the deficit—so cutting social programs will not solve the long term deficit problem. The social and economic reasons for continuing with universality include:

- administrative savings
- alleviating the poverty cycle
- no substantial saving of monies through selective universality
- preservation of social solidarity
- recognition of women's work

This research report is especially useful for women (and others) wanting to make the argument for continued and universal social security programs.

SPARC News, June 1986. *Working Conditions in B.C. Voluntary Social Services Organizations*—"Survey of the Impact of Restraint," "The Contracting Debate," "Dealing with Change and Restraint." Social Policy and Research Council of B.C, quarterly newsletter, 106-2812 West 12 Ave, Vancouver BC.

Series of articles put together by community practitioners dealing with the impact of government cutbacks and restraint on the voluntary sector. The articles point out that despite the tremendous strain being placed on community agencies, to date, a majority are "finding ways of coping and maintaining their core programs and the will to survive."

### THEORIES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF RIGHT WING POLITICS AS THEY RELATE TO WOMEN

Eisenstein, Zillah R. "The Sexual Politics of the New Right: Understanding the 'Crisis of Liberalism' for the 1980's." *Signs*, Volume 7, No 3. Spring 1982. (See also Eisenstein, Zillah R. *Feminism and Sexual Equality—Crisis in Liberal America*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1984, 256 pages, paperback.)

The New Right, says Eisenstein, attacks liberalism and the welfare state brought in by the liberals because they believe, in essence, that the welfare state is responsible for "undermining the traditional patriarchal family by taking over different family functions." Eisenstein argues that the growth of the welfare state is as much a response to changes in family structure as it is a cause of those changes, thus "the New Right has wrongly identified the source of the crisis and as a result has provided us with anachronistic models of the family and the state for the 1980's."

Eisenstein describes a fascinating process in this paper—the way in which women discover the weaknesses of liberalism—and the way that the New Right capitalizes on those weaknesses. She says the New Right's attack is directed so forcefully against married wage-earning women and "working mothers" because it is these women who have the potential to transform society. The reality of the wage-earning wife's double day of work uncovers the patriarchal bias of liberalism and capitalist society. As these women begin to understand the sexual bias in the marketplace and continue to bear the responsibilities of housework and child care as well, they begin to voice feminist demands for affirmative action programs, equal pay, pregnancy disability payments and abortion rights. They press for equal rights promised by liberal ideology. However, she states that capitalist patriarchal society cannot deliver on its "liberal" promises of equality without destabilizing itself and this is the "crisis of liberalism."

The New Right focuses its attack on both liberalism and feminism precisely because mainstream feminist demands derive from the promises of liberalism as an ideology—individual autonomy and independence, freedom of choice, equality of opportunity, and equality before the law—and because they threaten to transform patriarchy, and with it capitalism, by uncovering this crisis of liberalism.

Although this essay is written by an American with her own experience and analysis of the new right as it exists in the U.S., the analysis is equally applicable to the present Canadian situation with conservative governments and mounting attacks on feminism by groups such as R.E.A.L. Women.

This paper, along with Andrea Dworkin's first chapter in *Right Wing Women*, contributes much to our understanding of New Right politics and policies, and thus encourages us to think through the larger implications of their ongoing presence in government and elsewhere rather than dismissing them outright.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Right-Wing Women*. New York: Perigree, Putnam's Sons, 1983. 244 pages, paperback.

Andrea Dworkin provides us with a useful picture of what the political Right offers women in the first pages of this important book. She states

The Right promises to put enforceable restraints on male aggression, thus simplifying survival for women—to make the world slightly more habitable, in other words—by offering the following: **Form...** the Right offers women a simple, fixed, predetermined social, biological and sexual order;... **Shelter...** the Right claims to protect the home and women's place in it;... **Safety...** the promise (of the Right) is that if a woman is obedient, harm will not befall her;... **Rules...** The Right tells women the rules of the game on which their lives depend;... **Love...** The Right offers women a concept of love based on order and stability, with formal areas of mutual accountability. A woman is loved for fulfilling her female functions, obedience is an expression of love and so are sexual submission and childbearing. In return, the man is supposed to be responsible for the material and emotional well-being of the woman.

Dworkin tells us in no uncertain terms that right-wing women, their beliefs and their *reasons* for holding strongly to those beliefs must be taken very seriously by the rest of us. "Right-wing women have surveyed the world: they find it a dangerous place" she says. "They see that work subjects them to more danger from more men; it increases the risk of sexual exploitation... they see that women are thrown out of the circle of male civilization for having ideas, plans, visions, ambitions. They see that traditional marriage means selling to one man, not hundreds; the better deal. They see that the streets are cold, and that the women on them are tired, sick and bruised. They see that the money they can earn will not make them independent of men and that they will still have to play the sex games of their kind: at home and at work too. They see no way to make their bodies authentically their own and to survive in the world of men..."

Read this book and the others cited in this section to gain a deep appreciation of the power of right-wing religion and politics over women's present and future.

English, Deidre. "Romantic Love and Reproductive Rights," in Turner, Joan; Emery, Lois (eds) *Perspectives on Women in the 1980's*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983. 187 pages, paperback.

Deidre English delivered this speech to a conference entitled "Perspectives on Women in the 1980's" sponsored by the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. The book presents all of the conference speeches (Gloria Steinem, Helen Levine, Margrit Eichler and more) and is a useful gathering of material.

English's speech has been singled out for this reading guide because of her analysis of right-wing happenings in the U.S. (But if you get the book, be sure to read Gloria Steinem's opening address for even more comments and descriptions of the impact of the American right.) She points out that the pro-family movement appeals to a traditional ideal of romantic love... "In the old ideal, women were swept off their feet by chivalrous men. These men then protected and supported their women in return for sex, smiles and service."

English states that the Right to Life Movement and the anti-ERA movement are women's movements—that the women who belong to them believe there is something in these organizations for them. Like Dworkin, she says that right-wing women "know in their guts that if they are on their own out in the work force they are going to sink like

a stone. They are beginning to get the message that neither feminism nor the federal government has the clout to help them out, and they should attach themselves to men, and quickly. Fear is what it is all about."

She encourages us, in the rest of her speech, to call up an alternate romantic image of the world where people commit themselves fully to the equality of one another and states that "if they are able to motivate people to fight for a nostalgic return to tradition and a world which no longer exists, we can also fight for a world that does not exist now, but could exist in the future."

Eichler, Margrit. *The Pro-Family Movement: Are They For or Against Families?* Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1985. 42 pages, paper. (Available from O.I.S.E., 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, M5S 1V6)

For the past few years Canadian feminists have been caught back-peddalling against the pro-family rhetoric of the right wing—as exemplified by R.E.A.L. women. This paper desperately needed to be written, and every feminist women's group in the country should be analysing and discussing its contents for use in their own communities.

Eichler begins by describing statements about feminists by pro-family participants. The quotes from articles and speeches (i.e. "to the degree that women engage in promiscuous sexuality before marriage they have created violence and abuse"...) not only denigrates the work of the women's movement but create quite vicious slurs against those of us doing that work. Eichler suggests that the central accusation is that feminism is against the family and that in particular it denigrates the role of mothers and homemakers.

Eichler methodically details first the feminist positions concerning the family (including rights of mothers, marriage, maternity, paternity, pregnancy, maintenance and custody, pensions) and then details the central positions of the "so-called pro-family movement." She outlines policies developed by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, an umbrella organization of hundreds of feminist groups, to show how vocal the women's movement has been in its support of homemakers and "family" related issues.

Eichler then uses R.E.A.L. women policy statements to describe their perspective, pointing out the differences and similarities between feminist and pro-family positions. (Similarities occur around pension benefits for housewives.)

Eichler finds that the pro-family movement promotes a patriarchal family consisting of a husband who works to support the family and a wife who stays home; in which there is no equal pay, no birth control, no day care, no sex education, and the belief that unhappy marriages should not split up. She goes on to use present statistics on the actual make-up of the Canadian family to point out how unrealistic this expectation is.

Despite the fact that it is not difficult to prove the pro-family stance to be detrimental to the majority of Canadian families, Eichler suggests the propaganda of R.E.A.L. women, and others, does constitute "a serious challenge to the feminist movement that should be taken seriously." She states that despite the feminist movement's clear stance on behalf of housewives, wives and mothers, the feminist movement is perceived as anti-housewife and we have to do something more about this image.

She also suggests, and this is crucial, that "the feminist movement come to terms

with its own ambiguity towards families by making clear distinctions what types of families are seen as unacceptable (where there is exploitation, violence, abuse, incest, stifling of growth) and which ones are not only acceptable but deserving of social support (where there is mutual caring, support, respect, commitment and growth) irrespective of what happens to be their structure and composition." In other words, we feminists must declare and speak to our own pro-family beliefs.

Haiven, Judith. *Faith, Hope, No Charity—An Inside Look at the Born Again Movement in Canada and the United States*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984. 220 pages, paperback.

Although this review of the religious right does not deal specifically with women, except in reference to the anti-abortion activities, it is a useful book for those people concerned about the impact of right wing thought on women and families.

Haiven interviews leaders of the American religious right (including Jerry Falwell) as well as self-declared born again Christian in order to put together a descriptive picture of their beliefs and actions. She does not offer a detailed analysis of why this swing to the religious right is occurring at this time, although she does state "there is reason to believe that as long as the economic situation of the 80's fails to improve, the instant and thoughtless panaceas of born-again Christianity will be seen as a vast sanctuary by millions of North Americans" and further notes that this "sanctuary" is indeed a recruitment camp for right-wing movements.

This is not a knee-jerk diatribe against the leaders and followers of Christian fundamentalism. It is a respectful reporting of how some Christian fundamentalists think and act—and should be read seriously by those wanting to understand their power.

#### RECENT RESEARCH ON WOMEN AND LOCAL ECONOMIES CONDUCTED BY COMMUNITY WOMEN

The Women's Research Collective. *Women and Work*. North Island Women's Services Society, 1985. paperback report, 39 pages. (available from the above group, at P.O. Box 3292, Courtenay BC V9N 5N3)

This report on women's employment in the Comox Valley of Vancouver Island, produced with the assistance of a Canada Works grant, was designed to seek out, compile and present information about women and work. Questionnaires were administered in 227 interviews.

The issues raised were serious and familiar—lack of training opportunities, inadequate childcare, a welfare system that discourages single mothers from getting work, the lack of acknowledgement of women's work in the home, poor job creation programs, etc.

Research reports like this one have been coming out of women's organizations for a decade—yet the response from various governments continues to be minimal at best.

Davies, Cynthia; Cave, Kathleen; Mathieu Denise; Reid, Marilyn. *Cottage Indus-*

try, *Queen Charlotte Islands, 1985*. Island Women Society, 1985. 68 pages paper. (available from Island Women Society, Box 357, Port Clements, B.C. V0T 1R0)

The Cottage Industry Project, funded through Canada Works, intended to promote the development and enhancement of cottage industry and to encourage the development of independent economic possibilities for women on the Queen Charlotte Islands. The four research team members collected much data on existing and potential cottage industry on the Islands, documented available resources regarding financial assistance, planning, management, marketing strategies and skill development; conducted community workshops on the issue of cottage industry and prepared this report.

They found, that despite the high unemployment rate on the Queen Charlotte's, that many women have overcome what one might expect to be a wary attitude towards cottage industry and small business and are operating cottage industry relatively successfully.

Areas needing more discussion and work were identified as follows:

- more group work needs to be done to identify some of the more common hazards of working at home
- a structure through which working people with common pursuits can be put in touch with each other is much needed
- child-care organization could assist many women in freeing up time in which to do productive work
- there is a need for physical facilities in which to work, store, centralize and disseminate information
- an association of all correspondence students would be productive
- there is a need to co-ordinate the vast on and off-island information sources about career and skill inventory searches for the many individuals who are interested in doing such work.

This publication has much useful information on cottage industries—both generally and as they occur in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The lists of resources and the personal experience descriptions of those already involved should prove especially useful to women interested in pursuing the possibility of setting up cottage industry in their community.

Boudreau, Kathleen; Collins, Julie; Dunphy, Leona; Squires, Kathy. *Women on the Water—A Changing Tide* Awareness for Women in the Fishery, 1984. Report, 17 pages. (Available from Awareness for Women in the Fishery, P.O. Box 1000, Bras d'Or, Cape Breton.)

This small report, funded by Secretary of State Women's Programs, was completed by a group of Cape Breton Island fishing women who were in the process of developing a support group to help women overcome problems associated with their non-traditional employment in the fishery. This study was the first step in their organization—its purpose being to determine how many women were fishing and their particular circumstances.

146 of the 223 Cape Breton Island women holding personal fishing licenses completed a questionnaire. The results tell us that 94% of these women hold a part-time license and fishes with her husband on a share basis—and does not usually own her

own boat. 79% of the women felt fishing with their husband enhanced their relationship, although 48% stated they had no input into major fishing decisions. Given their part time work situation, most women had concerns about the lack of fringe benefits (pension, compensation) and unemployment regulations.

Figures indicate 20% of the women had problems with childcare, and 48% had problems keeping up with their usual home work, although 58% of the women said their husbands did share more household tasks when they were fishing.

The statistical analysis of the 47 questions in the questionnaire takes only 7 pages of this report—what would be useful to read as well (and perhaps should have been built in to this research from the beginning) would be women's own accounts of their fishing work on the ocean—how they adapt to working back at home etc. There are obviously some stories to be told and the statistics only begin to hint at what they could be.

The document outlines some of the issues of concern (lack of suitable clothing for fishing women, income tax concerns re joint ownership of vessels, disposal of license and vessel in case of death) and also includes a supplementary report (including details of fishery conflicts, practical information etc) on the local fishing situation. This information is meant to be of educational use to the local fishing women.

Ireland, Gisele. *The Farmer Takes a Wife—A Study by Concerned Farm Women*. Concerned Farm Women, 1983. 69 pages, paperback. (Available from Concerned Farm Women, Box 457, Chesley, Ontario N0G 1L0)

The crisis in the agricultural economy, epitomized by the loss of the family farm, was the rallying point for a group of farm women in several Ontario counties. During 1981—1983, women, concerned about the deterioration of their communities because of a combination of high interest rates, low commodity prices etc, organized protests. Out of that work came a realization that the brunt of the stress caused by this situation was carried by farm women.

This study, which documents the responses to 343 completed 31-page questionnaires, is written in a highly readable and descriptive style and works well to make visible the work that farm women do. The examples and statistics in it also clearly make the link between the impact of economic policies (such as high interest rates) and people—in this case farm women.

Chapters deal with farm operations, finances, husbands, children, careers, farm women and stress. Although questionnaire responses do not themselves produce descriptive stories the fact that farm women were involved in the analysis and writing of this study shows itself—it is a rich documentation rather than a dry reporting of percentages.

The purpose of the survey was to arouse an awareness among rural women and families of how they can better equip themselves to deal with the current financial crisis.

For Concerned Farm Women, the results of the survey meant they could use this material in their lobbying and organizing. It also meant they designed their ongoing work with farm women around issues raised—such as stress management, self esteem building, problem-solving and group dynamics. And, as often happens in work of this

sort, survey results can illuminate a particular area of concern and bring people to new understandings of their situation.

A case in point is the finding that since 1976, 58% of the women who had gone to doctors with emotional and stress-related problems had received drugs, and another 25% received drugs and counselling. As the study says "when these figures were presented to farm women within the community, they responded angrily. The women felt that they would be more likely to receive drugs for emotional problems than their spouse since mood altering drugs would be a safety hazard for men operating equipment. Women were disturbed to think that doctors would prescribe drugs for an emotional problem."

*Project Mayday. Mayday in the Community—a Research Study on Women's Experience in North Shore Single Industry Towns, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Schreiber, Terrace Bay.* Project Mayday, June 1985. Paper report, 201 pages. (Available from Project Mayday, P.O. Box 148, Schreiber Ontario, P0T 2S0)

The four communities involved in this study are situated close to the Hemlo gold rush area of northwest Ontario. The impact of this resource mega-project is being felt in all of their towns, and is only the most recent resource sector impact. Each town has a history relating to either mining, mills, forestry, or the railway.

The women of Project Mayday have been working since 1982 to increase the capacity of women in the area to participate fully in improving the status of their lives. This work includes involving women in defining the needs of their community as they relate to women and finding ways of meeting those needs, developing support networks for isolated women, educating the public on women's issues and lobbying for improved services and policies.

The gold rush impact alerted Project Mayday women to the fact that they were going to have to fight to ensure that this development did not take away already minimal services to their communities. It became clear that someone was going to have to speak to the concerns of women and families, and the study was developed out of that need.

It is important to note that because of their previous work, Project Mayday women already had a base in each community from which to begin the research, carry it out, and act on the findings, including mounting a major regional conference for women regarding the research issues.

Small scale intensive interviews were part of the methodology used by research teams of local women. Issues raised by the women in all four communities vary only a little, largely depending on the level of services and degree of isolation in each town. Employment, housing, work in the home, shopping, transportation, children, weather, education, health services, recreation, social life, neighbourhood, industry, community, and town services are all issues that women spoke to.

The recommendations arising out of the research reflect the high level of commitment these women carry towards understanding and improving the situation of women in single industry communities and of women in areas that are being impacted by mega-projects. The recommendations include:

- encouraging women to run for decision making boards and committees
- conducting surveys into quality of education

- working to improve quality of mental health service delivery
- establishing women's centres
- investigating business opportunities
- lobbying industry to allow greater input by women on the design of company housing
- lobbying local council regarding the need for more snow removal, and
- setting up plans to have local government declare one week or day a year "women's day" to honour local volunteer and unpaid work.

Northern Women's Task Force. *Northern British Columbia Women's Task Force Report on Single Industry Resource Communities*. Women's Research Centre, 1977. 100 pp. \$4.00

This report compiles separate documents outlining the results of research carried out by Task Force members in Kitimat, Fraser Lake and Mackenzie—3 single industry towns in northern B.C. The members were community residents and based their research on the method of participant observation.

Each of the towns under consideration serves a different resource base—Alcan (Kitimat), the Endako mine (Fraser Lake), and B.C. Forest Products (Mackenzie). Nevertheless, many of the problems women face are common to all three communities. Employment opportunities are limited, and the major industries are resistant to employment women. Some women reported that shiftwork creates problems in their seeking employment, given inadequate childcare facilities.

Housing is another recurring theme in the report—the problem of homes that are not built to withstand northern winters; inadequate indoor play space for children who may be confined indoors by weather for half the year; company houses that must be left if the husband ceases to work for the company or if the marriage breaks down. Shopping facilities also create difficulties with poor selection, high prices and low quality goods. Transportation—both within the community and to the nearest larger centre—is inadequate, reinforcing the isolation that many women identify as a major problem.

The report demonstrates that the development of communities is often accomplished without accounting for the needs of women and their families. It also shows that women do know what those needs are and how to address them.

Women's Research Centre. *Beyond the Pipeline: a Study of the Lives of Women and Their Families in Fort Nelson, B.C. and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory; and an Identification of the Socio-Economic Concerns Resulting from the Proposed Construction of the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline*. Women's Research Centre, 1979. 251pp, \$8.00

The research for *Beyond the Pipeline* was carried out under contract to the Northern Pipeline Agency, a body created by the federal government to ensure that the concerns of all parts of the communities affected would be considered in the implementation of plans for the Alaska Pipeline.

The researchers employed participant observation methods to gather information. Research teams of women living in each of the communities under consideration carried out small-scale intensive research involving interviews with other resident women.

These interviews form the basis of the report, supplemented by information gathered from community institutions and organizations.

The report first provides a detailed description of the lives of women in these northern communities. While employment emerges as the main reason why people live in the north, the women are clear about the other benefits of their lives there. They identify the beauty of the landscape, the friendliness and sense of community, and the good atmosphere for raising children as positive aspects of northern living.

But there are prices to be paid. Isolation, inadequate health care, poorly designed housing, and barriers to employment are all problems for northern women. Family maintenance is difficult when food and clothing are expensive and the selection is limited. Many women were concerned about the quality of their children's education.

From this knowledge of their situation, women express their reactions to pipeline development. While some women hoped that the pipeline would increase the prosperity of their communities, virtually all had concerns about its impact on themselves and their families.

As the report concludes, women in the north are not opposed to development. They are, however, opposed to the kind of "boom-bust" development that has been characteristic of projects in the north. *Beyond The Pipeline* provides a basis for undertaking development without forcing women and their families to pay a price that is simply too high.

### SOME GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES

Annual Conference of First Ministers. *Economic Equality for Women: a Progress Report*, Government of Canada, 1985. Pamphlet, 16 pages. (available from Supply & Services in Ottawa)

This pamphlet was developed first as a document by provincial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women to be given to Canada's First Ministers prior to their discussion of economic equality for women at the Nov/85 First Ministers Conference. It was subsequently published by the government of Canada.

It details the economic status of women in Canada, pointing out that "nowhere in our economy or in our society have women as a group achieved full partnership and equal participation with men." It then outlines federal government action to improve the status of women—these include federal-provincial co-operation in discussing women's issues, economic renewal, the fact that more women are small business owners, more women are in positions of influence, employment equity legislation, Parliamentary Task Force on child care, making federal training programs more accessible for women, legislation to conform with the Charter's equality rights provisions, Indian Act amendments, increased eligibility for spouse's allowance, divorce law reform, and so on.

Written, as most government statements are, to encourage a positive perspective, this pamphlet tends to make one feel that all is well in the world of women! The pamphlet is useful for women to use because it describes, albeit in a short manner,

just what the government has done "for" women. Thus we can be more specific as we develop lobby strategies, in clarifying what else must occur, and how.

Boulet, Jac-Andre; Lavallee, Laval. *The Changing Economic Status of Women—A Study Prepared for the Economic Council of Canada*, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1984. Paper report, 80 pages. (Available from bookstores, or by mail from Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, K1A 0S9)

Five factors affecting the economic status of women are looked at in this study. They are:

1. the socialization and division of labour based on sex;
2. the concentration of women in certain disciplines in education and professional development courses;
3. the lower earnings and greater vulnerability of women to layoffs;
4. that women live longer than men; and
5. the fact that women often lack financial resources when they are the sole supporter of a family and when they retire.

The report gives an overall picture of women's economic situation then examines five periods in a woman's life from an economic perspective: her schooling, first entry into the labour market, the birth of children, the decrease of family responsibilities after children leave the home, and retirement.

An overall concern of the study is to explain why there have been and continue to be significant gaps between male and female earnings through describing the economic status of women, the progress they have made and the impact of this progress on their overall economic situation.

Extensive use is made of statistics—indeed the authors' entire analysis appears to be built on material from Statistics Canada. This brings certain limitations to the study—it is sometimes difficult to read and of course analysis of the statistics is open to various interpretations. However, when this report is read along with others where women's perspectives and knowledge is tapped, the information becomes usable and interesting.

Their conclusions by the way, are familiar to all of us doing work on women's issues—that there is an underutilization of the talent and resources of women, that women face difficulties in diversifying their education to prepare for a career or occupation, women have difficulties in diversifying their education to prepare for a career or occupation, women have difficulties in finding positions equal to their qualifications, women have difficulties in securing equal wages for equivalent work, and women have difficulties in receiving professional development training to aid their chances of promotion. All of this is overlaid with the statement that the way family and household responsibilities are divided has a direct influence on the ability of some women to work outside the home.

#### SOME DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT THE ECONOMY

Women's Research Centre. *Energy Development and Social Institutions: Community Research from the Perspective of Women in Northern Communities Impacted by the*

*Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline.* Vancouver: Women's Research Centre, 1981. 33 pp. \$2.00

This paper documents the Women's Research Centre's presentation to "The Human Side of Energy: 2nd International Forum" held at the University of Alberta in August 1981. It begins with an outline of the Centre's approach to research—that of making visible women's lives and situations central to the research process. Focusing on the family as a social institution and an economic unit, it argues that new rules are necessary to ensure the inclusion of women in strategies for energy development.

Included in the paper are statements made by Eleanor Summer and Debra Dungey, two women involved as community researchers in the Centre's Alaska Pipeline project (see *Beyond the Pipeline* in local community economy section of this guide). They outline how the impetus for the research came from women in their respective communities, how the project was carried out, and the value of this approach to evaluating development proposals.

The results of the project are summarized. Recommendations are made for how governments and corporations might integrate a knowledge of women's role in the economy into strategies for development. Until then, however, women in resource-based communities "will be forced to act in self-defense to protect themselves and their families" from the effects of development.

Drache, Daniel; Cameron, Duncan (editors). *The Other Macdonald Report: the Consensus on Canada's Future that the Macdonald Commission Left Out.* Lorimer, 1985. paperback, 225 pages. \$14.95

20 submissions to the Macdonald Commission on Canada's future are presented in this book—submissions from unions, social planners, women's, church and native groups. They reflect concerns about competitiveness, over-industrialization, foreign ownership and the exploitation of people and environment.

The introduction states

these organizations do not ask for further tinkering with economic policy that will bring benefits to their membership in the short run. They assert that unless the underlying assumptions of government policy change, little else matters... they all arrived at this conclusion; not only must there be a significant role for government in the economy, but there must be new forms of government intervention, based on grass-roots involvement in government planning outside the traditional channels of public service and private industry.

Particularly useful chapters for women include *The Rise and Fall of the Welfare State* by the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, in which "the nature and purpose of social spending and the welfare state are clarified, arguments in favour of restraint are examined and found wanting, and it is shown that economic efficiency and social equity are not at all incompatible." *Fighting Poverty: The Effect of Government Policy* by the National Council of Welfare, *The Persistence of Inequality* by the National

Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Exclusion of Women from Economic Planning by Woman Against the Budget/Women's Research Centre, Economic Development and Social Justice by the United Church of Canada, The Informal Economy and the will to work by the Vanier Institute of the Family.

This book is helpful to people interested in discussing the economy in ways to include those who are usually ignored. The arguments for continued government involvement in social security are especially useful.

Czerny, Michael, Swift, Jamie. *Getting Started on Social Analysis in Canada*. Toronto: Between the Lines Publishing Ltd, 1984. 169 pages, paper.

This book is a terrific primer for people wanting to understand what social analysis is, and need a place to begin thinking about it. The authors state "social analysis, as we are using the term, means raising questions about society and seeking answers. Its purpose is not only to develop a critical awareness of the world but also to lead towards social justice."

Issues dealt with include housing, health, unemployment, aging, native concerns, women's issues, energy, microtechnology and economics. Chapter Six deals directly with economic issues, using a visit to the supermarket as an analogy. Chapter 13, "A Woman's Place..." describes women's concerns around family, jobs, work in and out of the home, patriarchy and quality.

Each chapter ends with some discussion questions and a list of further resources.

Ross, David P., Usher, Peter J. *From the Roots Up—Economic Development as if Community Mattered*. New York: The Bootstrap Press, 1986. 172 pages, paperback.

This definitive discussion of the informal economy is of interest to women because of their location in the domestic and household economy. Ross and Usher begin with a review of present conservative economic trends pointing out that application of conservative economic policies (cutbacks, de-regulation, reducing inflation through increasing unemployment and interest rates, privatization) has harsh results on those most vulnerable in our society (the poor, aged, very young and women) and does not re-structure the way our society is organized.

As they note

An economy controlled by successively induced contractions and expansions produces a boom and bust society. This type of economic behaviour is not the mark of a compassionate and intelligent society. We end up with temporarily reduced prices, a balanced budget and a stable dollar, but also with a high level of unemployment, reduced health care, an inadequate housing stock, fewer affordable educational opportunities, inferior day-care facilities and increased marital distress. But by conservative economic doctrines these must be regarded as successful policy outcomes.

Mainstream left and radical left economic policies are also critiqued by Ross and Usher. They point out that social democrats are concerned about unemployment rather

than inflation, and do identify more areas for intervention in a mixed economy, but the determination of social democrats to control private enterprise with large state bureaucracies is critically discussed. Radical left analysis, they say, has always opposed the informal economy because the family and local community are considered to be inefficient producers—industrial organization is considered “the way to go.”

Ross and Usher go on to describe the nature of formal and informal economic activity. Formal economic activity factors examined include the isolation of production and consumption roles, the extensive use of contracts, the effects of a competitive environment, the results of specialized economic roles, the use of hierarchical and authoritative organizational structures, and the constant pursuit of modernization and growth. They contrast this with the informal economy—pointing out that above all “the informal economy is organized in small economic units in which the objective of maximizing either profits or utilities does not and cannot exist apart from the goal of maintaining the mutual social bonds and obligations of the local society.”

The structures of informal and formal economy are outlined. A graph is presented to clarify what is meant by the “whole economy”—including big and small business, the public sector, community enterprises, collectives and cooperatives, voluntary activity, barter and skills exchange, mutual aid and the household.

In their concluding chapter on policy implications, the authors make the point that “if perhaps the equivalent of as much as 50 percent of recorded GNP is conducted legally outside of traditional accounting frameworks, we cannot simply focus on GNP and its derivatives as performance indicators and honestly claim to be developing current policy responses for the entire economy. What is clearly missing is one-third of the nation’s economic activity.” This is, of course, of particular interest to women whose work in the home and community has been omitted from the GNP for years.

A key point made is that “by focusing on all legal forms of economic activity, policies to manage the economy would also make explicit what an increasing number of economists and others are now beginning to acknowledge: that economic and social forces are closely linked, even though the formulation of policies and the monitoring of policy performance tend to separate the social and economic spheres in most industrialized countries.”

Cohen, Dian, Shannon, Kristin. *The Next Canadian Economy*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1984. 201 pages, paperback.

This cleverly written and easy to read review of what’s wrong with our present economy includes suggestions for some creative leaps from our present industrial age economy into the next economy—taking into account technological change, structural unemployment etc. In their analysis, the authors do not deal with the situation of women specifically, although the questions and recommendations made in the final chapter are ones that offer some room for women to join in the economic discussion.

They point out that attitudes and values appropriate to the last economy affect the strategies and tactics required for managing our personal, corporate and national security... and these attitudes and values have to be revised to fit the demands of the next economy. They recommend that:

- we are not likely to get anywhere if we don’t ask the right questions

- our institutions need to become more flexible
- while negotiating the transition, we should not constantly change the rules of the game
- we need ways to decide, that fit the size scope and duration of the problems we face; these being strategic decisions, we need to include a wide range of perspectives
- Canadians need to develop for themselves effective strategies for facing the transition to the next economy.

Their research also indicates that the best strategy for dealing with change, and creating change over the long haul is a strategy of co-operation, not confrontation.

Women's Economic Agenda Working Group. *Toward Economic Justice for Women—A National Agenda For Change*. Institute for Policy Studies, 1985. Report, 40 pages. (Available from Institute for Policy Studies, 1901 Q Street N.W., Washington D.C 20009)

This working group began through a seminar series on the economic future of women, and continued as a core group of women saw the need to develop an analysis of the long-term trends shaping women's economic status and a vision of what should be.

Their paper clearly states that unless "women's economic prospects are specifically analyzed and unless women's economic needs are directly addressed, the trend towards the 'feminization of poverty' and the impoverishment of women will only increase." They lay the responsibility for action towards equality and economic well-being on their government, and they are prepared to take the responsibility to organize and press for change.

The paper begins with an analysis of current trends and women's economic prospects—these include the feminization of poverty, the high-tech and service economy, the shrinking social role of government and new threats to women's wages and working conditions.

Their basis of action is based on five principles:

1. the need to recognize the variety of American families...all families deserve social supports to strengthen them.
2. as a nation we need to treat children as the precious resource that they are...
3. we need to value the work women do, paid as well as unpaid, as homemakers and caregivers...
4. public programs to enhance women's economic status should be designed to counter not only sex discrimination but also other powerful systems of oppression that limit women's economic prospects...
5. we must, as a nation, move beyond the assumption that each person is an economic island and that dependency on others is a mark of failure or inferiority...

The key economic agenda items they describe at length include:

- income support, through a single consolidated system at an adequate standard of living
- public sector job creation aimed at building up both the physical and social infrastructure of communities and based on the principle of pay equity

- public sector leverage to create and improve private sector jobs for women.

This piece of work is useful both in its content and organisation. It makes the case for a women's economic agenda in a logical and readable fashion and help us to piece together an overall picture of the impact of right wing economic policies on women.

# THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ECONOMIC PLANNING

*Women Against the Budget and  
the Women's Research Centre*

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## THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ECONOMIC PLANNING

*This paper was originally presented as a brief to the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada in September 1983. It was subsequently reprinted in its present form in The Other Macdonald Report, edited by Daniel Drache and Duncan Cameron, Toronto: Lorimer and Co., 1985. Women Against the Budget was a large coalition of women's groups, women trade unionists and individuals who came together in response to the unprecedented attack on human rights and the public sector launched by the government of British Columbia in a budget and legislative package of twenty-six bills presented on July 7, 1983. The paper was prepared by Jan Barnsley, Diana Ellis, Megan Ellis, Jean McIntosh and Esther Shannon.*

There is no doubt that economic development—the creation or expansion of the economy, of a community, region or country—is the core of nation building. Economic development defines settlement patterns, reaches daily into the marketplace and factory, and determines our standard of living. Historically, the nation builders have been recorded as men. Etched on the front of schools and dotted across the map of Canada are the names we learned in social studies class—Champlain, Galt, Laurier, McGee, Tupper, Fraser. Future textbooks will likely describe the nation-building efforts of Blair, Trudeau, Irving, McMahon and Smallwood.

From the early fur-trading days to present energy explorations, the relationship between nation builders—those who develop and those who govern—has been close and mutually beneficial. The men and companies shaping Canada's economic development play an intensive role in government policy decisions. For example, Harold Innis points out that "it is no mere accident that the present Dominion coincides roughly with the fur trading areas of northern America...the Northwest Company was the forerunner of the present confederation." (1) Furthermore, the very political act of constructing the Canadian Pacific Railway was intended to hasten settlement of western Canada and thus prohibit its annexation to the United States. It also brought the wheat economy to the prairies and a pattern of settlement and urban development that remains inextricably linked to the rail line.

Continued development of northern Canada's oil and gas has included enactment of federal policies to ensure Canadian sovereignty in the high Arctic; formation of a government-owned resource company—Petrocan; construction of instant, isolated resource-based settlements and, despite regulatory delays, the intricate agreement between local, provincial, federal and international government and industry to construct pipelines and coal development projects and so on.

For those of us who are governed—who are outside the corporate and government world—the benefits of developing the economy in this way are not so obvious. With the singular exception of Justice Berger's inquiry into the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, people's concerns about economic development have been given short shrift. What is

important to development planners as they assess socioeconomic impact are narrow interpretations of factors of production such as labour (how many workers are needed), transportation (how to we get the resource out), and environment (where can we dump the tailings). Community concerns and the concerns of women and families are seldom, if ever, seriously taken into account.

### THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN

The historical exclusion of *women* from the public worlds of business, finance, economics and politics means even less is known about how women live and work, and the resulting invisibility is reflected in public policies and legislation. The world of women—the private world of the home, the family, community, and limited areas of the labour force—if seen at all, is seen as peripheral to those who plot Canada's economic future.

However, the contribution of women to the economic development of this country has been, and continues to be, an enormous contribution of time, self, energy and ability. These contributions have been shaped not only by particular environmental conditions and economic organization but also by varying conceptions of femininity, sex roles, and female status vis-à-vis male status. The work that women do—household and subsistence production, child care, labour force participation, employment, and income generation—has a pervasive influence on the general quality of life that they are able to maintain, their capacity for personal fulfillment, and the survival and well-being of their families and communities.

Yet, in the majority of cases where this development characterizes the economic structure and organization of the country, women are excluded from all stages of the process, from planning, to execution, to completion. Many recent studies that specifically address the concerns of women in relation to development note that accounts of women's work are rarely found. Women's working situations, and descriptions or analyses of the work itself, are poorly or minimally articulated into general accounts of economic development. Lourdes Beneria makes the following statement in an article written in 1980:

Available estimates of the world's working population grossly underestimate women's participation in economic activities and cannot tell us much about what types of tasks women perform in terms of the existing gender-related division of labour. Yet we have reached a period in history in which the most basic tenets and assumptions influencing relationships between men and women in society have been called into question, and these include the existing division of labour.(2)

Although the question of the role and value of women's work has been raised many times and in many different parts of the world, the problem continues to exist. Women's interests and spheres of activity continue to be seen as at best marginal to and at worst irrelevant to economic development. Women *may* become visible if they work in the paid labour force, that is, outside the home in what is often called the public world.

But even in this regard provision is rarely made for their participation, and again their interests are seen as secondary at best.

Exclusion can therefore be understood to mean the following:

- A failure to see the sexual division of labour as significant to the process of economic development, with the result that only "men's work" is defined as relevant. Family, household and the domestic sphere are defined as marginal, and the work of the domestic domain and the character of the domestic economy remain invisible, unexplored and unconsidered.
- A failure to raise any questions that specifically concern women in the process of development, based on the lack of recognition that these issues are of crucial concern to women. Women are seen as being definitionally irrelevant to the process.

The traditional view of women in economic development has been, at best, to consider them as manipulable members of the paid or unpaid labour force. For example, the vice president of AMAX of Canada in 1980 described the proposed work force for the northwest B.C. molybdenum mine at Kitsault and said, "We're hoping to encourage mine workers with families to come here...the ideal would be 60 per cent married workers and 40 per cent single people. That makes for more stability in the work place." (3) These comments illustrate how women are seen as providers of service to husbands, children and the community. However, this work is not considered real work and women's needs, in order to carry out this work, were not taken into consideration in the socioeconomic assessment planning for Kitsault or other similar communities.

In some cases women's economic development concerns are assumed to focus on affirmative action and employment. Even when this limited view is acknowledged, it is not necessarily planned with women's interests in mind. A B.C. coal town planning study investigating the possibility of non-traditional work for women stated: "The effect of increasing the proportion of females in the direct labour force is to reduce the projected town population...the potential reduction in service and housing requirements may be considered important in policy analysis." (4) It is clear that these planners have absolutely no understanding of women's work inside and outside the home and the needs that arise from that work, not the least of which is adequate child-care and family-support services. The most horrifying revelation of their scenario, however, is the way the living needs of women and children are being *bartered* for supposedly decreased infrastructure costs.

Beyond this view of women and family as exploitable human units available to meet industrial and governmental economic development labour strategies, the actual lives, needs and concerns of women are invisible. The existing separation between the public world of development and the private world of home and family enforces and encourages women's continued invisibility.

### AN ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK THAT INCLUDES WOMEN

An account that fully includes women is one to which the analysis of the sexual division of labour and the domestic economy is integral, not marginal, and one that

seeks to explain the character of the relationship between the domestic domain and the wider society other than in terms of, for example, "women's role in the family." (5)

It is essential that an analysis begin with the household and/or family, the basic unit of membership in our society, and with the definition of this unit as an *economic* unit, with the recognition that the work of the household is work. It is predominantly women who do the work of the domestic domain. Any analysis must also proceed with their contribution in these terms. This analysis includes women directly in the focus of the investigation. Women's concerns with economic development would be one of the issues; women's participation in the process another. Women must not be seen as passive recipients, but as members of the household, the community and the society, with active interests and concerns based on active participation. This would be the case whether they worked in the household only, or in the household and the labour force. In considering economic development in these terms, the household/domestic economy thus becomes an integral part of the overall analysis of development and change. (6)

### CANADA'S ECONOMIC DECISION MAKING

In addition to the need for this new framework, further changes are needed in economic planning and decision making.

We are speaking as women residents of British Columbia. In B.C., we have had a wealth of experience with federal, provincial and international economic initiatives—particularly with regard to resource development projects. From this experience, we have learned a great deal about the economy, about how economic decisions are made in this country and about the impacts of these decisions on women's lives.

We have seen clearly that the *modus operandi* of Canadian economic decision making is expediency. In spite of the long history of energy/resource development in Canada and in B.C. specifically, Canada has still not developed a comprehensive policy or approach to energy/resource development. Further, Canada's approach to socioeconomic assessment of megaprojects has been one of *ad hoc* responses (as Andrew Thompson, commissioner of the West Coast Oil Ports Inquiry, pointed out in his report in 1978). For example, discussions about transporting Alaskan gas and oil south through Canada had been going on for more than a decade when this government's impact exercises finally began in northeastern British Columbia. This was *after* approval had been given for the largest capital project undertaken by private industry in Canada's history, the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline, *after* agreements had been signed with the U.S., and *after* dates had been set to begin pipeline construction.

We've seen economic expediency manipulate even such a widely supported Canadian value as the institution of the family—as evidenced by the stages of development of single-industry towns in B.C. During the resource extraction process, when an "independent" work force is seen as preferable, unmarried workers or workers who will leave their families behind are given priority for jobs. At stages when a longer-term work commitment is required, it is then expedient for workers with families to be hired and to bring their families to the town, for the "stability" the families provide. Of course, it is an exceptional single-industry town that provides the adequate housing, social ser-

vices, transportation, recreation and health care that those "stabilizing" families need to survive.

And we know that some provincial or territorial governments in this country will even be so crass and obvious in their attempts to control the energy development work force that they will subsidize alcohol but ignore the problems of the high costs and unavailability of fresh produce in resource communities.

It is also clear, from watching economic initiatives in this country, that Canada does not have an industrial strategy: economic decisions are not based on the needs of the people of Canada but rather they are based on what benefits the multinational apparatus, which is largely American dominated. Operating in the absence of an industrial strategy, with ad hoc responses based on expediency, has proved to be profitable for *some* Canadians. The vested interests of corporations and, in turn, of governments are served well by these practices. It is those of us who are governed—who are outside the corporate and government worlds—who suffer. It is community concerns and the concerns of women and families that are seen as exogenous factors (i.e. factors *outside* economists concerns) and are seldom taken into account in economic decision making.

We are the targets of myths and manipulation. When new economic initiatives are in the works, governments sell them to us by promising that they will mean more jobs. We know that in northern B.C. those jobs have rarely materialized but go instead to international teams of resource extraction/development workers. The "northern vision" attitude from the 1950s has contributed to the myth that any economic development—even "boom and bust" development—is good, but we know that the consequences are most often degradation of the land and disruption of social communities. We know the impact of an economy dominated by corporate strategy that requires periods of high unemployment. In such periods we are expected to buy the myth of restraint—to accept that governments simply can't afford social services and medicare and even human rights—at least that's what the government of B.C. would have us believe. And all the while corporate profits rise until profit margins reach the level that is considered appropriate for new investment. It is ironic that in "good" economic times governments tell us the social services that our tax dollars pay for are basic human rights, but in "bad" economic times they are the first programs to be cut—with the result that when we need them most, they're gone. As an example, witness the attacks on medicare which, if successful, will require user fees from people whose livelihood is threatened by unemployment and rising prices.

In B.C. and other parts of Canada the microtechnology revolution is quickly replacing resource development as our saviour. If we oppose it, we are derided for being "anti-progress." As women, our criticism of "progress" and "technological development" is frequently caricatured as a biological fear of science and machinery. In fact, anyone who has the audacity to criticize the corporate strategy of megaprojects and boom-bust development is characterized as being anti-progress. We are neither anti-progress nor anti-change. But we *are* categorically opposed to technological and resource development at the expense of the economic, physical and emotional health of those people whose labour is seconded to build it.

It is time to cut through the myths and manipulation that have produced widespread cynicism and alienation. Governments and the corporate sector have to

start telling the truth! Their economic practices have not produced the classless society North America is supposed to be nor the "chicken in every pot" we were all promised after the last Great Depression. And ours is not an economy out of control. There are decisions being made by governments and corporations: decisions to put hundreds of millions of dollars into highways and stadiums rather than social programs or health care; decisions to delay new investment until profit margins grow still higher. Different decisions can and must be made based on different priorities.

The Public Commission on Social and Community Service Cutbacks has reported: "Everywhere in this province, one of the richest in Canada, residents expressed uncertainty, often approaching despair, about the future...they saw the way of life in their communities deteriorating, and could only imagine worse for the future." (7) On a macro level, the people of Ocean Falls and Tasu in the Queen Charlotte Islands, who saw their communities die, and, on an individual level, the Community Incentive Program workers who are in danger of losing their \$50-a-month supplement know first hand the despair the Public Commission referred to.

The cost in human terms and in economic terms is too great to continue on the path of corporate expediency and ad hoc economic responses.

The cost is especially high for women.

### THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMY ON WOMEN

When the Women's Research Centre did a socio-economic impact study related to proposed construction of the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline, our researchers found that:

The women, on the whole, seemed to feel that if this pipeline was an economically viable project, it would be built, despite people's concerns. They saw themselves as those who must cope with whatever the governments and big business did to their town, their world, when major development took place. (8)

That is what women's role has been traditionally: we are expected to cope, to adjust, to pick up the pieces. Whenever our husbands go off to work camps and resource towns, when major development takes place, *or* when the bust follows the boom—as it inevitably does—women are expected to provide the social services and other assistance that governments say they can't afford to provide.

We see it happening now in B.C. The government, using the myth of restraint as the only option, is cutting programs for handicapped children and the elderly; they are freezing welfare rates; they are threatening services for the disabled, day care, legal aid, and crisis and preventive services for women and children who are victims of violence. Women in the North have told us that they are appalled at the effect of the education cutbacks on their children. One community's school bus service has been cut back, so that the children now arrive at school an hour and a half before school starts. Of course further staff and maintenance cuts mean the school doors don't open until 9:00 and there is no supervision of the children as they play and wait outside for that hour and a half. When services are cut back, the burden of filling that gap falls on women. For most women, in these times of recession, that burden is being added to an already

dangerously over-extended workload—that of a job in the labour force and the tasks of raising a family—on less money with fewer support services. Women are already providing more than should be expected of them. We have a right to say “enough!”

In recession-hit communities in northern B.C., the loss of work for the major breadwinner in a family plays itself out in various scenarios:

- Many families simply stay where they are, knowing there is no work in other parts of the province either. So far they have been managing on unemployment insurance and by bartering for services, rather than paying cash.
- Many families use their savings to live on, thus losing that security they were raised to respect. When these savings finally run out, which of course happens at different times for different families, there is *always* a crisis.
- In one northern resource town the mine has closed—first temporarily, now permanently. The crisis-centre worker noted an escalation of marriage breakups after the unemployment benefits ended.
- Some families decide that while the woman stays in the community with the children, who are in school, the man will travel to other parts of the province or country to try to locate work. The women sometimes go on welfare, although we do know of some instances where women could not get welfare in these situations unless they presented a court order stating they had charged their husband with desertion. Other women manage to find part-time work through a government job-creation grant or by working as a waitress or clerk. Women are expected to manage—to bear the responsibility of keeping the family together.
- Some men leave the family, ostensibly to find work, and do not return.

The choice for governments when they decide to cut social services is to “pay now or pay later.” For women there is no choice: we and our children pay now in the strain of carrying unbearable burdens and we pay for years to come as we suffer the costs in long-term damage both to our families’ physical, emotional and mental health, and to our economic status.

To say all of this is unfair is an understatement. It is also wrong-headed in economic terms.

Perhaps pushing women back into the home worked in earlier times—it has certainly been done before—but times have changed. After the Second World War, women, who had been encouraged during the war to join the work force, were sent home. They were subjected to an emotional and cruel campaign that said that if they stayed in the work force they were taking jobs away from the men returning from the war, the men who deserved jobs. Similarly, today we know that women in B.C. are caught in a vicious Catch-22 situation: if they are on welfare they are castigated as welfare bums; if they work outside the home they are accused of taking jobs away from men—even though the jobs available to women are in the low-paying female job ghettos and are jobs which most men refuse to consider.

Many of us have grown up with the romantic notion of how our mothers baked their own bread, canned fruit and vegetables and made their children’s clothes to contribute to the economy of their families, to help make ends meet. But times have changed and we can’t go home again—it doesn’t make sense, because it isn’t cost-effective. In

simple terms, it costs more to bake your own bread than it does, in this technological age, to buy processed bread. And more to the point, statistics show that most families need two salaries to survive. Sixty-one per cent more families in B.C. would be poor without that second income.(9) Whether they stay at home or not, an incredible 68 per cent of female-headed families live below the poverty line. And for those 10 per cent or more of Canadian women who are battered women, economic independence is critical—a matter, often, of life or death.

So the strategy of pushing women back into the home doesn't work.

But what we are seeing in this country and in this province are attempts to hold down wages in the public sector and thereby, by a "happy" accident, force wages in the private sector to drop. Working women, who already earn appreciably less than working men, will suffer most. In addition, education cutbacks will mean that women will never move out of traditional ghettos. Increases in course costs, decreases in funding, strict control of university and college programs, all combine to limit women's educational possibilities.

And, as microtechnology becomes our new economic saviour, we can see what the effects on women will be. As the B.C. Federation of Labour has stated:

While micro-technology will affect the employment of all workers to some degree, it will be women who are affected disproportionately. Most studies agree it will be the workers in the clerical, bank, retail and service sectors who will bear the brunt from micro-technology.(10)

## CONCLUSION

The picture we've presented of how the economy has an impact on women is drawn from years of documenting women's situations, from working with women in rape crisis centres, in transition houses, in unions, in educational institutions and in the home. What we've learned is that an economy based on corporate expediency and ad hoc responses does not work for us.

Changes are needed in economic decision making. It is essential to include women's perspective and to recognize their work in the home and outside, in the work force, as the valuable contribution it is to our economy and to the quality of life. Decisions can and must be made that take into account and consider the impact of economic development on women.

Governments must make choices and decisions based on a commitment to the greater good, a commitment, if you will, to a "just society": a society that moves beyond the profit-margin mentality and its illusions of "success" to a vision that encompasses the needs of its citizens to work, to grow and to achieve their full potential as individuals and as members of a community.

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# WE ARE THE EXOGENOUS FACTORS

*Presentation to the NDP Action Group on Jobs*

*by Nancy Hannum for the  
Women's Research Centre*

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## WE ARE THE EXOGENOUS FACTORS

*The NDP Action Group on Jobs was a national NDP Task Force which held hearing and issued their report Canada Unlimited: Turning Our Potential Into Jobs in April, 1985.*

*This paper will deal in general with economic planning policies as they concern women and will talk about some basic perspectives for looking at the issues of unemployment and the economy from the experience of women.*

The Women's Research Centre has had an economic working group since about 1976. During that time we have worked with women studying their communities in several resource based towns in B.C.—most notably Kitimat, Mackenzie, and Fraser Lake. We also worked with women in Fort Nelson, B.C. and Whitehorse in the Yukon to look at the implications for them, their families and communities of the possible building of an oil pipeline down the Alaska Highway. That work is history now but it was very noticeable to us at the time of the hearings on the pipeline, and often in dealing with government or company officials, the general view was that women had no business dabbling in economic issues. This is changing.

It is beginning to be acceptable if not urgent now for women to be invited to have input on questions about jobs and the economy. This is perhaps because the social impact of government restraint measures and other economic policy trends are being seen to have such a major impact on women that they may indeed affect "the economy" and our society itself. Included here are such things as:

1 . *The heavily weighted impact of cutbacks on jobs held by women in the formal economy as well as the impact on their work in the household economy.*

Carole Wallace gives a good account of these impacts in an article on "Women and the Deficit":

...Expansion of the public sector in the 1970's created a large percentage of new jobs which allowed Canadian women to increase their labour market participation from 35 per cent in 1966 to 53 per cent today. One can readily argue that the existence of the (public sector) is both the precondition and the cause of increased labour market participation for women. In recognizing and especially in paying for the work involved in educating the young and in caring for the sick, the old, the disabled and the dispossessed, it is also the central mechanism which has allowed us to move from the confines of the family into the larger society. In short, the welfare state has undoubtedly done more for the status of Canadian women than any number of councils or commissions.

Women are also the chief beneficiaries of the programs and services offered by the public sector. We form two-thirds of the burgeoning army of the poor whose only revenues come from some form of public assistance. Because we live longer than men and our living conditions are more difficult, we have more

health problems and consume considerably more than our share of medical services. As mothers we are the recipients of family allowances and, in most cases, of the child tax credit. We are the prime beneficiaries of social services, of legal aid, of subsidized housing, of minimum labour standards and of any number of other programs denounced as excessive by the likes of the Fraser Institute.(1)

2. *The devastating impact that technological change is and will have on women's work in the formal economy.*

Pat Armstrong, in her book *Labour Pains*, outlines some of the effects of microtechnology:

While disagreeing on the specific consequences of the new technology, (social scientists) agree that the effect will be enormous and that it will probably be very different for women and men. Not only will the microchip change the structure and number of jobs in the market but it will change their location as well. Reversing a trend that is more than a century old in this country, micro-electronic technology encourages the growth of employment in the household, thus confounding the separation that has grown up between (labour force) "work" and "home." (2)

3. *The combining of these trends with other social/economic factors, (including abandonment of financial responsibility for their children by divorced fathers, demographic differences between men and women) which has come to be called and statistically identified as "the feminization of poverty."*

A friend in Toronto reported that she did some polling in a public housing unit—despite her awareness of these issues she was stunned by the nearly 100% absence of men in this large complex—it was all women and children.

All of these trends weigh heavily, not only on the women who experience them but on the very society and economy in which we live.

## THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ECONOMIC PLANNING

Women's work, both in the home and the formal economy, is often invisible. The Women's Research Centre has been in a position to hear of women's lives in B.C. communities—stories from the past eight years of women in single industry towns and resource communities at boom and bust times and during mega project development processes. We have seen the planning priorities of engineering, transportation and labour utilization in mega projects, meanwhile making *invisible* the life of the community. Women, in economic terms, have either been seen as exploitable factors in developing resource based towns or as simply invisible. In Tumbler Ridge, for example, the original planning reports proposed both community facilities and a process for developing strong community services. But in the end the priority in Tumbler Ridge

was crime control, streets were designed as cul-de-sacs to discourage easy public transit routes and enclose the circle in which women and children live.

Women in economic terms are seen as "exogenous" factors—outside the economic model. I'm an economist's daughter and I have joked for years about wanting to write a book called "We are the Exogenous Factors." I came upon the term again recently in Cohen and Shannon's *The Next Canadian Economy* (3) where they told a story of the disasters which can befall economic planners who choose to ignore—or make "exogenous"—issues/events too large for their carefully designed models.

The thing we know about exogenous factors is that in the end they can blow apart the economic models. It isn't just that the economists are wrong, but that: (1) the price of error is often quite major; (2) it could have been predicted; and (3) there is information to be had in time to avert these disasters simply by looking directly at the issues and seeking information from the people involved.

What we are saying is that it is very dangerous to our economy and society to consider women as exogenous factors. Not only is it dangerous to exclude women's work but if planners choose to hear there are some very informed voices to hear from.

#### THE NEED TO DEVELOP MORE SOPHISTICATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

Pat Armstrong, in her book *Labour Pains*, describes a context of political economy which encompasses the state, the household, and the formal economy. In her model she acknowledges the sexual division of labour in the work place as well as the home and the inter-relationship between work in the home and in the economy. In other words, we have to look at men's work in the home and in the formal economy and at women's work in the home and in the formal economy and the inter-relationship between, for example, cuts in the public service (formal economy) and men/women—kinds of work (day care/teachers/long term care) and its implications to the domestic work of both men and women. "This approach is sex conscious; it recognizes that people come in two sexes and that all change has different consequences for men and women." (4)

#### THE BACKLASH

There is a back lash attitude towards women's work (coming not just from the Right) with such phrases as "Our economy can only afford one job per family" (read men's jobs). We have heard this before in B.C.—"First we have to get the men their jobs back in the forest industry and then we can deal with the less important issues" of, for example, welfare rates—there are priorities!

Job creation programs which focus on the private sector are more heavily weighted towards job creation for men because what is suggested as the inherent intrinsic superiority of the private sector over the public sector is a variation of the assumptions that men's work is more important than women's work, that the public service (predominantly women—read teachers, hospital workers, child care workers) is not "productive"

and that the "family wage" (i.e. man's salary) is more significant to the economy than the so-called second income of women.

Understanding the work of women in the home, the public sector and the private sector, is not just important because feminists say so—but it is highly essential to economic planning in this country that the situation of women is clearly analysed and understood in economic terms.

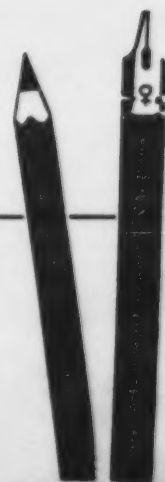
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# AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

*by Diana Ellis*

November, 1986



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## AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

*This speech was delivered to a conference of women living along the north shore of Lake Superior, in north west Ontario, in October 1985. The conference attended by 100 women from resource-based and single industry communities, was designed as a follow-up to action research undertaken by some community women concerned about women's issues and especially about the impact on their communities of the most recent resource development—the Hemlo gold rush. Their group was called Project Mayday.*

As Diana Ellis had been involved in helping the researchers develop their original project in 1984, she was asked to return at the project's completion to deliver the Keynote address at their follow-up conference. The talk, entitled "An overview of women's involvement in the economic development process" was intended to provide participants (most of whom had not been directly involved in the research) with a basic understanding and an analysis of how women are, and could be, involved in the economy.

The address transcript is included in this kit because it presents in everyday language one analysis of the economy and women's participation in it.

### WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Eight years ago this November I helped organize the first canadian conference on women and economic development. It took place in the northern British Columbia pulpmill town of Prince George, and was attended by 100 women from all over B.C. On the first evening we listened to a woman named Gene Errington talk about women's right to be involved in economic development. Here I am, eight years, a couple of research studies, a film and many briefs later—addressing another conference on women and economic development—this time here in Ontario. The work continues and it grows.

This tells me several things. First of all, this issue is a national issue. In fact, it is most effectively a northern national issue because it is in the smaller and especially single industry towns that the issues in women and economic development become clear—the contradictions become clear. (Talk to a Toronto or Vancouver woman about sidewalks, shopping and housing and she will need convincing or will hear it in a different context.) Second, this issue *does* mean something to women. Economic development is not seen to be one of our traditional issues, yet when we put our heads to it, of course we see that it should be. It is not an issue that is easily understood, but I think there is some mystification that goes on whenever we hear the word economics.

I want to lay a framework for understanding what economic development is, how women have a right to be involved, how women are excluded from economic development decision making and how they can be included. Then I'm going to talk about the value of doing this work with women, the pitfalls inherent in doing it, where we can begin and how we can begin with maximum effectiveness.

I will clarify the perspective from which I speak right now. I am a feminist. For me, that means I advocate for women's rights—I put women first. I start with women's experience as the basis for developing analysis and strategy. I believe, and this is based on my own experience, that all of women's lives are on a continuum based in women's oppression. Some of us are in a more privileged place than others, but we are all on the same continuum. I also believe this to be life long work. And, I don't want a piece of the pie, I want to re-write the recipe.

Secondly, and this is a lesson I am learning from the situation of third world women and development, I believe women are *already* involved in development. We don't need to be "integrated into development"—we don't need to be added on. It's not as if we're not already doing a lot of the work! We are already part of the economic development process. It's just that our work of reproduction, of caring, of building community, our impact on the economy is dismissed, or is not seen; it is invisible. That work needs to be recognized and understood for its real value—by ourselves as well as others.

### UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE ECONOMY IS SOME DEFINITIONS

First of all, what does the word *economy* mean? According to the dictionary, economy, in the sense we are using it means "the administration or condition of the concerns and resources of a community." In fact, the word comes from the Greek word for household management! Another description of the economy that I like comes from a publication called *Getting Started on Social Analysis in Canada* and is attributed to the United Church of Canada. It reads "the economy is something we share in common... It is the way we put together human and natural resources for the good of the common life... It is a vast collective enterprise and is the domain of no particular sub-group in society... It must be marked by justice, participation and sustainability... It summons us in the time of our stewardship to be good gardeners and partners."

The term "economic development" usually refers to the creation or expansion of the economy of a community, region or country. The process of economic development occurs in many ways and can be a huge undertaking involving thousands of people and billions of dollars or it can be a smaller and more local development.

#### *Why does economic development happen?*

It usually takes place because corporations see the development of a specific location or resource as a way to make money. Governments usually encourage corporations to undertake development projects and sometimes even solicit their interest in poorer areas of the country.

#### *Who benefits from economic development?*

Very simply, the first priority of any economic development is to create profit. This gives economic power to the company or organization responsible for the development. And, depending on the nature and size of the project, the development process can

also offer benefits to people living in the area, benefits such as employment. Often, the employment prospects benefit people from outside the area—and this has been a cause for concern with some projects. For example, when there were plans to build the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline through north east B.C. the size of the contracts to be let by the companies involved prohibited nearly all of the small town companies from bidding on them—they just couldn't handle work of that large a nature. Many of them had, up to this point, been very "pro-pipeline" and had seen its construction as a real salvation to their businesses.

So again, the first priority of any economic development is to create profit. I am not saying this profit is necessarily a bad thing. We live in a capitalist society and profit is the name of the game. *It's where the profits go that is the issue.* I believe that large and small economic development projects must be overseen and managed in a human fashion with people's concerns in mind as well, and that responsibility must be borne by the appropriate levels of provincial and federal governments and the corporations involved. I also believe that humane planning can be done without using up all the profits, but it should use some of them.

#### *Who is affected by economic development?*

We all are. The quality of day to day life in an area depends on the economy, and so economic development affects the lives of everyone. The people most directly affected are the people who live in the area being developed or those who work on a project.

#### *How are communities affected by economic development projects?*

Industrial and resource development greatly changes the social and economic environment of a community or region. Ideally it creates jobs and develops new areas. However, this can create problems. Populations increase as new workers arrive, often with families, yet the community or regional infrastructure does not expand to meet the needs of the expanded population. Many development projects that involve the extraction or processing of natural resources create problems of transiency in communities. For example, a large labour force is needed to build a gas pipeline but once it is built relatively few people are needed to maintain it. Boom and bust development puts a strain on the services and social fabric of even the most stable community. Many serious problems can occur because of the rapid change in a community as new people, money and a whole new way of life engulf it.

Along with an increase in population, local businesses and economic activities may expand if the demand for their goods and services increases, although the Women's Research Centre's pipeline study indicated that the business people of Fort Nelson, B.C. and Whitehorse, Y.T., did *not* intend to expand their premises during the expected boom. They understood all too well that a bust would follow the boom and they did not want to be caught with larger facilities and a reduced population several years down the road. I mention this because it is a common belief, or hope, that development will bring more services to a community. In fact, the development is often "sold" to the community or region on the grounds that it will bring more opportunities for the people

who live there. Those kinds of statements need careful analysis.

In general, economic development has *not* been accompanied by a concern for the human needs in the area being developed—or human needs has meant only the needs of the workers, usually male, and even those are sparingly and stereotypically looked at. We've all heard stories of strippers, booze and porn being made available to the men working in isolated areas of the country—supposedly to keep them happy. And, the well being of the workers is a concern of the company but usually only insofar as it affects their productivity in the workplace. The needs of the rest of the people who make up the community (that the men live in too)—the women and children—are rarely seen or provided for.

### WOMEN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The traditional view of women in economic development has been, at best, to consider them as manipulable members of the paid or unpaid labour force. For example, the vice president of AMAX of Canada described the proposed workforce for the north-west B.C. molybdenum mine at Kitsault and said "We're hoping to encourage mine workers with families to come here...the ideal would be 60% married workers and 40% single workers. That makes for more stability in the workplace." Those comments illustrate how women's role as a community stabilizer was, in fact, understood by this company in terms of her provision of service to husband, children and community. However, her work was still not considered real work because the tools she needed to do it successfully were not taken into consideration in the socio-economic assessment planning for Kitsault.

In some cases women's economic development concerns are assumed to focus only on affirmative action and employment. Even when this limited view is acknowledged it is not necessarily planned with women's interests in mind. A B.C. coal town planning study investigating the possibility of non-traditional work for women being made available stated: "the effect of increasing the proportion of females in the direct labour force is to reduce the projected town population...the potential reduction in service and housing requirements may be considered important in policy analysis." These planners, in considering the impact of having two labour force workers per household, showed they had no understanding of women's work inside and outside the home and the needs that arise from that work, not the least of which is adequate childcare and family support services. The most horrifying revelation of their scenario however, is the way the living needs of women and children were to be bartered for supposedly decreased infrastructure costs. They were not seeing the labour force work as being intrinsically valuable to women—it was seen as a way to *decrease the overall town population and thus provide fewer overall services.*

As a result of this kind of thinking, women and families living in towns or areas created or expanded through economic development face particular hardships due to inadequate planning—planning that has not seen them and does not take their needs, their work, their contribution to community into account. We are familiar, I am sure, with much of this. Existing medical, dental and counselling services are not planned to

meet the needs of increased population. There are seldom medical practitioners with specific expertise in obstetrics, gynecology or pediatrics. Homes are designed by people who have no intention of living in them which has to explain why there are so many "southern" style home in regions where the winters are long, harsh and dark. Suburbs consist of endless curving streets crescenting in on one another, with no sidewalks to push the stroller and walk the toddler on, with no corner grocery store for a quick purchase of the loaf of bread that we just ran out of with three lunches to make. Community centre and recreation facilities are inadequate—or adequate only for men's recreation needs.

### UNDERSTANDING THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

How can we understand this exclusion of women and women's concerns? What is it, why does it happen and how does it happen? I believe we have to understand the nature of this exclusion—the nature of the problem, before we can do anything at all about working towards the inclusion of women.

From work at the Women's Research Centre, and from some of the literature on women and development in the third world, and from the work of people such as Helga Jacobson, Pat Armstrong, and Dorothy Smith, we are able to state that exclusion means *the failure to see the sexual division of labour as significant to the process of economic development, with the result that only "men's work" is defined as relevant*. Women's work is invisible or dismissed. By the sexual division of labour I mean just that—the way the work is divided between the sexes in our society. Exclusion of women means the family, household and domestic sphere are defined as marginal and the work of the domestic domain and the character of the domestic economy remains invisible, unexplored and unconsidered. And that's the work that we do. Exclusion means there is a *failure to raise any questions that specifically concern women in the process of development, based on the lack of recognition that these issues are of crucial concern to women*. Women and their work are considered irrelevant to the process of economic development.

### WHY WOMEN ARE EXCLUDED

Before I go on to describe what inclusion would look like, I'm going to offer an analysis of why this exclusion occurs. Dr. Dorothy Smith, Professor of Sociology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and a founder, with others, of the Women's Studies Program at the University of British Columbia, and of the Women's Research Centre, has put together an understanding of why this exclusion occurs in her paper *A Peculiar Eclipsing: Women's Exclusion from Man's Culture*. She describes the work of administration, management, organization and government of our society as communicative work. The ways in which we think about ourselves, one another and our society are given shape and are distributed by the specialized work of people in universities, schools, television, radio, newspapers, book publishing—by all the organizations

forming what she calls the ideological apparatus of society. This way of organizing society developed in Western Europe 400 or 500 years ago and is an integral aspect of our western capitalist society.

But, and this is a big but, Smith contends women have been excluded from the work of producing the forms of thoughts, images and symbols in which thought is expressed and ordered—the books, bibles, media. There is a circle effect in that men attend to and treat as significant only what men say. The circle of men whose writing and talk was significant to each other extends backwards in time as far as our records reach. Men listened then and listen now to what one another said/says. Women are listened to when it is thought to benefit men. The fuss that was made about the gender gap in the last federal election is a case in point—only when it was thought that women might vote in large blocks for particular policies, was consideration was given to developing statements to encourage women to vote for specific candidates and political parties.

Dorothy Smith points out that this is how a tradition is formed.

A way of thinking develops through the written and printed word, and in speech. Questions, solutions, themes, styles, standards, ways of looking at the world... Throughout this period in which ideologies became important, first as a way of thinking, legitimating and sanctioning a particular social order, and then as ideologies became a basic part of the organization of society, women have been *deprived of the means to participate in creating forms of thought relevant or adequate to express their own experience* or to define and raise social consciousness about their situation or concerns.

They have never controlled the material or social means to the making of a tradition among themselves or to acting as equals in the ongoing discussion of intellectuals. They have had no economic status independent of men. They have not had, until very recently, access to the educational skills necessary to develop, sustain and participate in the making of a common culture.

Women have had of course, access to and used the limited and largely domestic area of women's magazines, television programs, women's novels, poetry, soap operas, etc. But this is a limited zone. . . *the universe of ideas, images, themes—the general currency of thought, have either been produced by men or controlled by them.* In so far as women's experience has been entered into it, it has been on terms decided by men and because it has been approved by men.

This is why women have had no written history until very recently, no share in making religious thoughts, no political philosophy, no representation of society from their view. Smith notes, "*As a result the perspectives, concerns and interests of only one sex and one class are represented as general.*" (Emphasis mine)

Smith makes it clear that this exclusion of women from the making of our culture is not the product of a biological deficiency and that the forms in which women's silences and exclusion has been practiced arise differently. Some have arisen inadvertently as a side effect of where women are in the world—the private rather than the public world. Some have been a process of active repression or strong social disapproval of women's intellectual or political leadership, others result from the way society is organized through socialization, education, work and communication.

The final point I want to share from Dorothy Smith's analysis is that the deprivation of authority and the ways in which we have been trained to not get involved in issues/topics other than those defined by men has the additional effect of making it difficult for women to treat one another as relevant figures.

We have difficulty in asserting authority for ourselves, we have difficulty in grasping authority for women's voices and for what women have to say. We are thus deprived of the essential basis for developing among ourselves the forms of thought and images which express the situations we share and make it possible to begin to work together. *Women have taken for granted that our thinking is to be authorized by an external source of authority.*" (Emphasis mine)

I do not believe all of this is a deliberate plot. It is the way our world is organized. And that's why it is so hard to crack—if it were a plot we could outplot them, but it's a method of organization that is very complete.

This is why I see the research study just completed by Project Mayday, and the similarly oriented research done in B.C. as revolutionary material. It is women speaking to other women in an authoritative manner about their own experience.

I get depressed when I think about how long this has gone on and how much potential in women has not been reached. But I don't feel hopeless because in understanding the nature of the problem we can begin to figure out some solutions. So I know that first of all, when *we as women treat one another and ourselves as people who count, then we can break out of our silence.* We protest, organize politically, learn of women's history, we treat one another as authoritative speakers of our experience and concerns. We validate our experience. We believe that we have the right to speak, that there is something of value to say. The research that forms the basis of this conference is an example of women taking authority over the description of our lives by ourselves. So, in understanding the nature of the oppression we make decisions about how to work to alleviate it in our personal lives and move outwards from there.

### THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What does the inclusion of women in economic development mean? An economic framework that includes women is one *which says first of all that the sexual division of labour is integral and not marginal.* Again, all labour is divided in our society and much of it is divided on the basis of sex. An analysis of that would look at what is divided, why, how it is divided, and would look at the implications of that. An analysis of the sexual division of labour would also *seek to understand how it is that this sexual division of labour has always subordinated women to men.*

An example might be useful here. Because of my sex—female—I can bear a child. Because of my sex I can also nurse a child. In our society, the way the sexual division of labour is divided means that because of my sex I am also expected to take care of that child. We all know there are lots of arguments pro and con regarding others (fathers, governments) who should also share that responsibility. Many of us struggle to have those "others" take a share of the work, many of us decide to take on the bulk of the

child-rearing role ourselves. The reality is that in our society there *is* economic loss for a woman who has children. She has to make the decision to stay home part or full time, or pay for part or full time childcare if she returns to the salaried labour force. Again, this is a choice many women say they make ably and freely, but it is certainly a choice *we are socialized into accepting has to be made by us*. The long run implication of this sexual division of labour is that women who have children are put into the position of being economically dependent on men, if they are in a relationship, or, all too often, economically dependent on the state through welfare if they are abandoned by their mates, or living in a family situation below the poverty line.

So the result of the sexual division of labour around the bearing and rearing of children means women are often left economically dependent on men. Given that in our society money equals power and control, this means that many such women have no power and no control over their lives. They have no economic choices except those they can arrange with his agreement. In a society supposedly committed to the equal status of women, this is an unsatisfactory situation.

An economic framework that includes women would understand what this division of labour means and would do the following: pay women a decent living wage for their work; take into account the extra work of raising a child and offer paid maternity and paternity leave for a child's younger years, as in Sweden; provide decent pensions for women not in the paid labour force, and provide good universal childcare so the wonderful resources of our country—the children—needn't be faced with the continuum of wonderful to minimal childcare that exists in Canada today.

It is actually astonishingly easy to deal with some of these problems. The solutions are there. It first of all takes a belief that children are important and that women are important and that they have the right to be involved actively in making decisions about their lives.

An economic framework that includes women is one which says the sexual division of labour is integral, not marginal, to our society. As well, in order to include women in the economy, you require *a framework that begins with the household and/or family (the basic unit of membership in our society) and defines this unit as an economic unit with the recognition that the work of the household is work*. So we recognize that, understand what this work is and include it in the economic design measures. The most obvious example is with childcare and the obvious need for women's work outside the home to be paid a living wage. But there are other examples from the work that's been done with women and single industry towns.

## WOMEN'S WORK AND THE ECONOMY

The work of running a household has obvious implications for community planning. It means we understand this work involves, for example, maintaining the domestic home, transporting family members to and from their various community involvements, and linking one's own home and family with the rest of the community. When this is understood, then the community should be planned with homes having reasonable access to

schools, parks, and at least corner grocery stores if the main shopping mall has to be downtown. Transportation is another necessity. How possible is it to get around or "out" of the community? Is there any form of public transit for women or men to use in their daily work, or does the family have to have two vehicles in order to avoid isolation? Is there a bus or train schedule that enables women to leave the community for a doctor's appointment, for example, and return in the same day?

I recall the women of Mackenzie, a north central B.C. logging community, telling me that the Greyhound bus left at 10 p.m. in the evening for the nearest large centre 140 miles away, and returned the next morning. This meant a trip out always involved at least two nights away. Not an easy thing to arrange when you are taking young children to a specialist's appointment, or trying to arrange a one day "mental health break" for yourself. Those are just a few of many many examples of planning that should occur with an appropriate understanding of women's work in mind. The research studies completed by the women in B.C., by the Women's Research Centre, and now by Project Mayday offer the best examples I've seen.

Another aspect of the work of the household and family is the maintenance of family health. For women this begins with pregnancy and childbirth and continues after the children are born—and also involves care for herself and her husband. Given the young age of much of the population of resource and single industry towns, it is not surprising that so many women are having children during their stay in the community. Women making this choice often tell us they are worried and concerned about having their baby in the town. What if there are unexpected difficulties and they have to be shipped out by air at the last minute because there aren't the facilities or skills to handle childbirth complications? Others wonder about the high rate of caesarian sections they know occur at the nearest hospital and wonder if this is a factor of having a baby in an isolated area. It is not possible to have each of these communities staffed with a full time obstetrician, but why not consider models of health care that can deliver better quality and more appropriate pre and post-natal care? Those models do exist—the Health and Human Resources Centres set up in B.C. in the mid 1970's are a good example.

The point I want to make with all of this is that women must not be seen as passive recipients, but as members of the household, community and society, with interests and concerns based on active participation.

When we consider economic development in these terms, the household and domestic economy becomes an integral part of the overall analysis of development and change. It means we see the world differently as far as women are concerned—we see it inclusively. I think about statements Indian people have made regarding their land-use. Again—a B.C. story will suffice as an example. When the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline routing was being considered in north east B.C. the Indian people living there decided to make presentations to the socio-economic and environmental panel that was reviewing the situation. The Indian people using the land—the men and women who hunted, trapped, fished and snared, each made maps of each of their traplines and fishing creeks. These maps were transferred onto many plastic overlays and at the final hearings their presentation involved beginning with a basic map of the area that looked, of course, as if the immense tracts of land were uninhabited and desolate. Slowly, they each got to

overlay the maps of *their* land use and by the end of the presentation everyone could see that the land was, in fact, well and judiciously used. This mapping of people's personal and community use of land was an essential part of making visible the life of the Indian people on the land.

I want us to map the work of women in a similar way. What are our tracks throughout a community and region, and why? Clearly defining the family as an economic unit, not just houses on streets where people get stored and restored, means we see the family's value to society not only in a social form, but in political and economic forms too. We recognize woman's work in the family as real work, not just something she does to pass the time, and it means towns and cities are designed differently—employment strategies and resource development take women's needs into account, childcare is planned differently. We look at all these things based on our understanding of what women's work in home, family and community actually is.

First, this exercise of including women, families, and children is not something that policy planners should tack on to the end of their considerations—i.e. "well, now that we've planned the town let's make sure there's room to build a daycare centre if the women demand one," or "let's ask the companies if they're going to have affirmative action plans now that the mine site is built." The inclusion of women must begin at the beginning and not just because we're partners, by and large, of the men, but because we are people in our own right with contributions to make and needs to be considered.

The second point is in response to the question of how much this inclusion will cost. This question is most often asked by men, by corporations, by governments. The question is often framed with remarks like "we're in a recession and can't afford it really," or "we're not in a recession but have so much on our hands that we still can't afford it..." *The only real cost is the cost of changing one's attitude about women and their role.* I do think it is a matter of belief. If one believes the inclusion of women is important, then it becomes a priority. *Yes, it will cost money and yes, the money is there.* In fact, we can't afford not to do this. There is a great human and economic cost presently being paid by women who are single parents, by women who do not have the opportunity to reach their potential as Canadian women.

As an analogy, I think about the issue of wife battering and how some of us in B.C. work with a set of grounding assumptions about battering. One of those grounding assumptions is the statement that "a woman does not deserve to be beaten no matter what she does—no one deserves to be beaten ever." That simple assumption is the crucial and integral point around which some really progressive work on wife battering is happening. In saying it we are saying that women are not possessions, that women do not do anything to deserve being beaten, that beating is unacceptable. That is a profound shift in values and it has to be made and believed before anyone can do effective work for and with battered women. The Women's Research Centre has made some attempt to address this issue in "The Grounding Assumptions" section of this kit.

So, here we are. We understand why women have been excluded from economic decision making. We know how to include them. Some decision makers understand this too and work to help. Some decision makers mouth agreement with our analysis but do not act. More often, decision makers still dismiss us and attend to their own

concerns, or only to their own stereotypes of what women are and do.

And, here we are in the community. Some of us understand what all of this is about and are excited about understanding. Some women think that it is too esoteric—not at all as relevant as rape crisis centres and pensions. And lots and lots of women aren't involved in women's issues, as we would define them, at all.

There are several challenges—to ourselves to understand the local organizing challenge, the challenge to make this issue a more broadly accepted one by women generally, and the challenge of pushing concepts forward to the places where decisions are made, and having decisions made in favour of positive change.

Where does the work begin? It has begun and there is much to build on. In B.C. and here in northwest Ontario it has been going on for eight years. So we have some structures established. One is a way of working with women at the local level—in the doing of community research and in the production of descriptions of women's lives. The other is in developing structures to carry our findings forward—of lobbying, advocacy, changing the minds of decision makers, learning how to present our material. Both parts of this work have to continue and grow.

### BEGINNING THE WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

The most crucial work, I believe, is in the direct work with women. We can get nowhere until we understand women's lives, can describe women's work, and can continue to piece together the relation between women's work and the economy.

I want to offer a few examples, yet again, of what we have come to understand about women's relation to the economy based on what we learned from earlier work. We all learned much from the study northern B.C. women did in their single industry towns of Kitimat, Fraser Lake and Mackenzie. I remember at one of our first workshops the community researchers talked about women who had been telling them, in the interviews, about how shopping was a problem for them. I, being an urban person transplanted to the north, felt myself thinking, "well, if that's all they have to be concerned about then surely they are just bored and have found nothing to replace the shopping they used to do in the city?" Well, I learned a thing or two.

Who is responsible for feeding the family? Who is responsible for ensuring that the children grow, that they don't get sick, that all family members get a decent meal at the beginning, middle and end of their long work days? Who is responsible for clothing the family and providing a comfortable home atmosphere? By and large, women are. What happens if there is only one grocery store in town and their prices are already too high? What happens when the produce is shipped in once a week and is gone by the second day and what's left isn't fit for the family gerbil? What happens when you have to catalogue-shop all the time and the third choice children's jacket arrives and it is the wrong size and it means another three weeks before another winter jacket can get to you and the snow is already falling outside? What happens? That woman's work does not get done and it becomes a source of frustration and concern to her.

These are all integral aspects of the work of shopping—the work of managing the home economy. We make the decisions about the food to buy, we buy it, we turn it

into nutritious meals for our families so they and we can go out into the public world to work and be satisfied citizens, to make the money that makes the profit (for the company) and make the money that returns to the home—money that we save and spend so we can start the circle again. It was from the words of those women that we came to this clearer understanding of the work of shopping and how it relates women so directly to the economy.

Housing is another matter women in northern communities knew a lot about. Why? Because they live and work in their homes—as all women do—but perhaps to a greater extent than do women in southern urban centres because of the severe climate and fewer opportunities to go out. The women were the ones who told us about wooden basements being built in geographic areas with seven month winters and permafrost. The women told us about inadequate insulation levels and having to put jackets on their children when they played downstairs. They described condensation dripping down basement walls, and told us about the housing designs “from the south” with front doors that open directly into living rooms in communities with little paving and maxi-mud, ice and snow. The women were the ones who said there was no room to store the food they had to order in bulk (to save money) because there were either no basements or inadequate storage for their work as northern homemakers.

The women were the ones who, because of the paper thin walls between the sleeping and living areas of the house, drove their young children around the community during the day when their graveyard shift husband was home sleeping. There was no room for a worker who needed to sleep in order to be as productive as possible back at work and a toddler who needed to play in order to grow. These homes were not designed for women to work in, but a simple thing like home design is not difficult to change when the work of women in the home is understood and understood to be important, and attended to from the beginning by all those involved.

We need descriptions of how women work and live, from their own perspective, in their own words, because as Dorothy Smith says, women’s contribution is still invisible—to ourselves and to others. That’s why I think it is critical to continue organizing and working with community women around this issue.

### **WORKING WITH WOMEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL SOME ORGANIZING GUIDELINES**

Before I go on to talk about what we do with that work once we’ve done it, I want to share some ways of working and organizing with women on change oriented issues. These methods have proved useful to some of us active in the women’s movement, and other areas as well.

First of all, if we’re going to work with women on a particular issue, we must understand the *context* of our work. Berit As, the Norwegian feminist and activist, calls them the pre-conditions. Is the community favourable to the issues or not—what’s the general level of consciousness? Knowing this will help us make decisions about strategies. How possible is it to organize, to lobby? With women, it is crucial to be aware of how women have organized before. Our history tells us of successes, failures

and backlashes. When we find the linkages between our goals and our history we can make intelligent decisions about whether and how to modify our goals, strategies or models and how to communicate our knowledge to other women.

Second, we must always have a *base* to work from. That base is people—it doesn't mean those people all have to share absolutely similar values on the issue—but we must have the people to work with. We can't parachute ourselves into a place and start to organize because it won't work that way and it is disrespectful of people in the community. The base doesn't have to be large, but it must be real.

Third, whenever possible, *work from the experience of women*—make women's experience a base for our action, our research, whatever. When I spoke to a women's gathering for peace about this I posed the following questions for them to consider in doing "peace-work" from the experience of women. What does peace mean to a woman? What does non-peace mean? So many women say they don't want war—why is that? Should women's voices be used to convince and mobilize other women rather than in convincing governments to change?

Fourth, in organizing and planning be sure to consider the factor of *women's time*. Many of us are mothers, or full and part time labour force workers—our time to attend meetings and be out in the public world is limited. Those of us who work in the home don't have easy access to a typewriter or a copier so what are the kitchen table and phone activities we can do? Remember to go to where people are in their daily lives, don't always expect them to be able to come to you. That means utilize the family drop-ins, the women's centres, the recreation centres, the pre-school meetings etc. as places to meet people and talk about concerns.

Fifth, make the *objectives* of the work concrete. The *goals of the work are the broad general statements of what you want to accomplish. The objectives are the specific, measurable things you want to achieve by a given point in time.* From the experience of working on women's issues, especially those involving attitude change, it is most important to clearly define the problem and break it into specific work objectives or the overall problem remains too amorphous and impossible for individual people to remain interested in.

Sixth, and finally, *mobilize and organize for success*. To stay motivated we must determine what we mean by success. Obviously to achieve our goal is success. But not achieving this is not necessarily a failure. Other goals, such as learning new skills, improving skills, expanding a network, can also be viewed as successes. The easiest projects or actions are those in which we have a high measure of control over the outcome. Often, that means we have to set our sights relatively low with the result that we do not seem to make much of an impact. To avoid becoming discouraged we must again build in a set of goals and achievable objectives which are meaningful to us. And let everyone in the group participate in determining what is considered a success—for the group as well as for themselves as individuals.

Some of the actions that B.C. women involved in economic development organizing have done include: the purchase and operation of a daycare house; development of a transition house for battered women; the forming and funding of women's centres; development of a family drop-in centre. Other activities included participation on regional economic development committees, making the decision to get one of their

group members on to town council—and winning, becoming a member of a college advisory committee, and investigating and beginning a local business for women.

### TAKING THE COMMUNITY ISSUES FORWARD

I've talked about ways of beginning the work with women, now it's time to consider taking our new understandings of women and their relation to the economy forward to places where decisions are made. Taking them forward is easy enough, but having these people understand and act on our recommendations is something else again. The tremendous organizing work done by Decade Council in Thunder Bay stands as a good model of how to keep at those in the bureaucracy and continually push for change. It is hard work, and is often less gratifying than working directly with community women because in that work we get so much hope from one another. It can be a letdown to find ourselves so blocked at other stages as we move on.

This is a major pitfall area to think about. It can't be avoided—you just have to steel yourself, take lots of vitamins, strategize day and night and not give up! Our society is organized not to hear us. We should hone our lobbying and monitoring skills, know who is *for* us inside corporations and government offices and be prepared to work with and around them as necessary. It took the Women's Research Centre a full year to get funding from the Northern Pipeline Agency for the community research study women wanted to do in northern B.C. The study is considered, I am told, "state of the art" in community research, yet was not widely hailed by the N.P.A. However, Fort Nelson women have managed to use it to write extensive sections on women into their village plan so maybe that's a success we rest with for the moment.

Changing attitudes about women is a long slow business and it is hard to see the larger picture of which we are a part. That's why it's important for us to communicate with one another. We must begin small and local, seek contact with others large and small, and stay small and local until we feel ready to expand in terms of working on the issue. Eight years ago one woman in Thunder Bay had articulated the issue of women and economic development and she was able to come to the Prince George conference. When she returned, the Decade Council in Thunder Bay started a women and economic development committee and this conference today is a direct result of all of that. In B.C., women have completed two major studies, have been the basis for the National Film Board film *No life For A Woman*, the Women's Research Centre has done presentations to international symposia on development, we presented to the Macdonald Commission on the Economy, we've just been published in *The Other Macdonald Report* and are presently working on a discussion paper that will describe the impact of restraint and recession on women and families in B.C.

So, we do the work with women, we identify problem areas, we identify appropriate people and policy makers, we advocate, lobby, make statements, put ideas forward, we speak again. We continue to analyse, we learn more about the economy, we develop strategies as the needs arise. And above all, we are flexible and we always work so that information and skill we gain empowers women.

### UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THIS WORK

Before I go any further I want to deal specifically with problem areas others of us have encountered. As any of you who have worked on women's issues know, we often are suspect because we dare to describe ourselves as women rather than girls or ladies. I'm not being cynical or paranoid here—just realistic. In doing this work of defining women's relation to the economy, we are moving into an area that many others feel we don't belong in—it seems appropriate to them only if we talk about rape, equal pay, daycare. All of the women in all of the communities I have worked in have gone through a baptism of fire as they began to talk about and make recommendations on women and economic issues. Here are some of the arguments people have raised along with some of the arguments we have developed in response. Again, I mention these not to frighten you, but to prepare you.

One of the things people will say (and these people can be women or men) is "*Well, these are human concerns, concerns of all people, not just women's concerns...*" This statement can have a remarkably paralyzing effect on any discussion you might be having. Why? Because it is a form of dismissal of the stand you have taken as a woman speaking to these issues and because it, yet again, takes the *woman* out of the picture. Yet it sounds so reasonable doesn't it? It is the reasonable argument we have heard many times and it always leaves us back-peddalling.

One response might be to say "Yes, but the humans I'm talking about are women" and continue on from there. Or, "Yes, it is a human concern and women are humans with specific expertise on this issue," or just "This piece of work deals with women because they have something to say that hasn't been heard before so I'm going to talk about it as women's concern..."

The other side of the statement about "these issues being so useful and important that they are all people's concerns" is the one that says "*Oh, but these are only women's concerns.*" The implication here is "where are the men?" Again, this is a way of subtly diminishing us and our work. It may be unintentional or intentional. The only response here is to state emphatically that the study/research etc. had as its focus *women* so that's what it talks about. It wasn't designed to talk about men except as how women described or experienced them. One might add that a review of the literature regarding economic development shows remarkable few studies focusing on women, so this one is a landmark study!

A very common remark is that "*all the women do in this study is bitch/complain/nag*". People talk a lot about women complaining. I used to respond to that statement by anxiously saying "but we're not complaining, we have legitimate concerns here..." Then I decided that to complain was a good thing. The dictionary defines complaining as "expressing dissatisfaction or stating a grievance," and that's what we're doing. Part of what's happening with this kind of remark is a put-down of women who are not satisfied with the status-quo. Feminists are sometimes told that we don't have a sense of humour either—that means we don't smile enough—we don't assure those who might be oppressing us that we really aren't hurting! I think we should own up to complaining and say "of course we are complaining—there are lots of unsatisfactory

situations regarding women and economic development and we're saying something about it"...and then get right into the discussion. In other words—let's not deny our complaints. Instead, turn their complaints about us into a way for us to talk about the issues.

We are all familiar with the remark "*Well, you're just a bunch of women's libbers, my wife wouldn't be concerned about those issues,*" or "*I don't want to join up with you, you're feminists and you hate men and I still want to live with my man.*" Depending on who says it I either feel a pit of anger welling up in me, or empathetic feelings when I know a woman who is saying it is in fact afraid of seeing the possibilities of her own life. Usually when people make a remark of that sort they are trying to denigrate the work at hand by declaring it the work of a few radicals who don't represent the majority. I always respond directly by stating clearly what I am and what I believe in. "Yes, I'm a feminist and here's what that means to me"...then I state my definition, and then continue talking about the issue at hand. I also clarify that I'm not pretending to represent the majority of women. Women are not monolithic—we do not all think alike. No piece of research ever represents everyone. But we can always state clearly that the research does represent the women we spoke to—their concerns *are valid*.

If someone wants to dismiss us on the "you're only a feminist" grounds then they will. It is not useful to get into the usual liberation arguments with them; we have better things to do with our time. However, many people don't really know what feminism is, or have an unfortunate stereotype of it, so at least give them your working definition, see how they handle it, then continue discussion about the issues at hand.

It is important to remember that many women do not dare use the word feminism, or women, even though they may believe, or want to believe. It is hard work to be a feminist. The challenge of it begins at our very core, in our own homes, in our relationships. I can remember when I was first married many years ago, hiding my Ms magazine inside a TIME magazine when reading it in the house. I think it is important to understand and get in touch (again) with those fears and be sensitive to them.

And as for the right wing claims that feminists break up the family? Anyone who reads the Project Mayday report will see how strongly the research argues to have women's work and life in all aspects (labour force and home) recognized and given its full due. I am a feminist and I am pro-family. My pro-family ideal is that of a non-stereotyped, flexible, interdependent, social and economic unit where all members participate in decision making. We must unpick the pro-family rhetoric of the New Right and insert our own definition of family.

It is also worth remembering that many men will dismiss us because they don't know what we're talking about and many men will dismiss us because they know exactly what we're talking about and they don't want us talking about it! They don't want us challenging their power in these areas. I recall spending a lot of time working out a research contract with the Northern Pipeline Agency and having to convince one person not to take the word "women" out of the contract and replace it with "people" or "community." Once you take out the women, you take out the focus. I think he knew what he was trying to do.

Of course, many men will not dismiss this work at all, and will learn much from it. We need to help those men develop ways of talking about our work in their own

worlds.

A particular problem of working on contentious issues in small communities is the way we are so easily pinpointed and scapegoated. Be ready for that. Most of you are activists already and know what that feels like. It means you build support into your work, you have networks, you allow yourself some time off if you've been on the front lines for too long, you develop a thicker skin. Be prepared, that's all I can say.

The final point I want to mention, and this is a repeat, is the issue of money. "This will cost too much—the Indians want something, the environment has to be taken care of, workers need more pay and now the women want sidewalks?!" Again, this statement intimates that we really don't count, that we aren't worth spending the money on. Yes, it will cost money, but it is a matter of priorities. Again, all it really costs is the change in attitude. We are worth it—we matter—women's issues are a priority. Let us look at the budgets and we'll show them how it can work for everyone's benefit.

### **SUMMARY—WOMEN'S RIGHT TO BE INVOLVED IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

In this discussion, I've given some definitions for the economy and I have reviewed what economic development is and its impact on us. I have described how women have been excluded from economic development decision making and why, and described how we must be included. I have talked about how some of this work can begin. I have talked about some of the difficulties of doing this work and in closing I want to outline again why we have a right to be involved. To do this I am drawing from the keynote speech given to the B.C. conference on women and economic development eight years ago by Gene Errington.

We have a right to be involved because we have an expertise that simply is not being incorporated, simply not being recognized, it is not being included, it is not part of any other plans that have ever gone on in any of the towns in this province. We are the ones who live in the neighbourhoods, we live in the houses, we live in the communities. Men don't live there. Men come home and rest there and sleep there but they do not live there. That is not part of their world, that is not their daily life. It is not their sphere of activity, they do not understand it and when they design it they do not design it with what we need.

We have a right to be involved in economic development because we are the ones who live in the isolation. We live in the trailer camps, we live in the individual homes. We have few places to meet, and this is reflected, devastatingly as we all know, in alcohol and drug abuse, in depression and suicide and marital breakdown and all the other kinds of things that seem to be so much a part of life in a single industry town, in a resource community, in an isolated area.

Men come into these towns to work, which means they already have a built in society into which they go. They work with colleagues. They are introduced

to people who then become a part of their lives. Their isolation is not the same as ours.

We need to be involved, and have a right to be involved because we are the ones who are responsible for the family, for family life, and for the children. It is the women who have to be concerned about the safety of children. We are the ones who are responsible for nurturance. Shopping is not a trivial issue to talk about. We have to work with whatever is given and if that is insufficient, then our work is very difficult. We are the ones responsible for the social life. And we have as well, and this is one of the reasons why we must be involved—we have talent and abilities to offer in the public world, and we have the need for personal satisfaction and for adult companionship and for our own growth. We have a right to be taken seriously when we enter that world.

So we have a right, a responsibility to be a part of the planning of economic development, part of the implementation, part of the evaluation. We are the ones who take the results of economic development and we are the ones who should benefit from it. We need to define our territory that has not been extended to us. We need to share our own concerns and communicate on a new and different level. We don't want to influence from the background, we don't want tokenism. We need to locate power, learn about it, how to get it, who has it, how we can wield it for a better world.

We have a right to be involved in economic development because we have a right to take part in the decisions that affect our lives. We are the experts on our needs, and the needs of our children, and the needs of our families, and the development of our communities. We, quite simply, are experts on the quality of life."

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# WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY:

## GROUNDING ASSUMPTIONS

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## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY GROUNDING ASSUMPTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

*Grounding assumptions are statements that present a basic analysis of a situation and provide a useful place for discussion to begin. The following nine grounding assumptions developed by the Women and Economy project of the Women's Research Centre provide an analysis of women and the economy that makes women and all aspects of their work a visible part of the economic structure of Canadian society.*

*1. Women's work in the family and household is an integral but invisible part of the already existing economy.*

- *Women work everywhere.* It is assumed that women carry out the following tasks and although there are exceptions (i.e. there are relationships where a partner might assume this work) women do not have the choice *not* to do this work, unless they have the economic means to pay someone else to do it, or unless their partner (if they have one) agrees to share it.

- *Women manage the household.* This involves a variety of tasks:

Being responsible for food involves planning and doing the food budgeting, planning nutritious meals, shopping for food, cooking meals and cleaning up afterwards, preserving food and possibly planting/maintaining a garden.

Women's home maintenance work includes planning and doing daily and seasonal cleaning of the home, overseeing and/or doing home repairs, ensuring the presentation of a comfortable home atmosphere for everyone who live in and visit it. Women also plan, budget and do the shopping for most goods in the home (including family clothing) as well as doing the washing, ironing, mending and sewing of clothes.

- *Women's maintenance of health and relationships within the family and household* includes supporting and encouraging other family/household members in their work and social life, acting as emotional "buffers" between other family/household members and between their experiences at work, community and home, caring for family members when they are ill, and working to prevent illness generally. This emotional support work takes time and energy and perhaps more than any other aspect of women's work, is usually taken for granted.

- *Women generally have the responsibility of caring for their children.* This includes feeding, clothing, cleaning, transporting, emotionally supporting and keeping safe, children in all their developmental stages. Women are also usually responsible for locating necessary childcare or baby-sitting so other activities (ranging from labour force work to visiting the dentist or having an evening out) can be undertaken.

- *Women also work in the paid labour force.* According to 1982 figures, 51.6% of all Canadian women participate in the paid labour force and women make up 41.2% of the entire labour force. Women in two parent families who work for pay contribute an average of 28.7% to family earnings.

*2. Any valid analysis of the economy must include an understanding of the sexual division of labour that occurs in the family, household and the labour force.*

The way that family and household responsibilities are divided on the basis of sex has a direct influence on women's ability to work outside the home in the following ways:

- their involvement (entry, exit, re-entry) with the paid labour force is directly affected by the birth and subsequent care (or arranging of care) of children.
- the number of hours women are available to work, their availability for overtime work, training programs, promotion and relocation are all influenced by women's family and household responsibilities. For example, in 1982, 25.1% of women in the labour force worked part time, whereas only 6.9% of men did.
- the type of work women do in the paid labour force is also part of a sexual division of labour. According to 1981 figures, women make up 71% of "white collar worker" (clerical sales, managerial, professional) compared to 39.1% of men. Women make up 29.0% of "blue collar workers" (recreation, transport/communications, farming, fishing, logging, mining, craftsmen) whereas men make up 60.8% of the blue collar labour force.

*3. Women's vulnerable position in the economy is based on the sexual division of labour.*

Women's vulnerable position in the economy is in part determined by her class position but in fact her very class position is vulnerable since it often depends on her relationship to a man.

Because of women's responsibility for the care of children, and the lack of affordable quality childcare, women working in the paid labour force who become pregnant have to make a decision about how and if they will continue this work after their child is born. They may have to work part time or be under-employed, thus earning less than a living wage, and becoming more prone to lay-offs and cutbacks.

Depending on women's level of skill, health, potential wages to be earned, their marital status, the employment status of their partner (if they have one), the ages of their children (if they have them), and the cost of childcare, women may only have the alternative of welfare.

#### *4. Economic crises have different impacts on women and men.*

The work of stretching the household budget is considered women's work, as is the management of family stress. Therefore, when an economic crisis such as a recession causes family income to drop, women's household management and service work increases. The uneven impact of economic crises on women and men is also felt in the labour force and is due to the sex-segregation of the labour force. Cutbacks in mineral production, for example, perhaps due a decrease in world prices or a corporate decision to relocate a mine elsewhere, can cause large numbers of men, who traditionally do mining work, to lose their full time jobs. Sometimes their female partners are able to seek out any available part time (and low paid) service work to keep the family somewhat economically viable. On the other hand, government decisions to lay off public service staff, which often occurs during an economic crisis, can mean loss of full time work or a shift to part time hours for the women who make up the majority of public service sector staff. Overall, wherever or however the economic crisis occurs, women are responsible for managing its impact in the home, and to a large extent in the community as well.

#### *5. All changes in the economy have different impacts on women and men.*

For example, the introduction of computers into the workplace specifically changes the nature of the clerical and service work that is done, due to the sexual division of labour, largely by women.

Mega-projects often provide well paid jobs for some men, and the jobs for women are usually the low paying spin-off clerical or service work in the community. As well, major economic development projects are often planned without considering the life and work of all community members (including women and the family) and thus the differential impact is not seen until after the fact (i.e. crowded schools, increased demand on local services, lack of social service and health staff, inability to get enough fresh food). Resource development (such as offshore oil, logging, mineral extraction) is also often located away from settlements and family, thus the price of a paycheque is often family and community separation.

#### *6 . The family is an economic as well as a social unit.*

Government policies that are often described as "social policies" (such as taxation, family allowance, pension, welfare) actually see and use the family as an economic unit. These policies develop and change depending on the government's socio-economic values, choices and priorities.

Another indicator of the family's existence as an economic unit is the fact that the economic situation of the family determines its amount of consumption of marketplace goods and services.

*7. The work women do to maintain family and household is of economic value.*

Studies done for Statistics Canada estimate that if there were a monetary value attached to the unpaid work done in the household by women, and if this were recorded, the gross national product (GNP—the added accumulation of the value of goods and services produced in a country) would increase by 40-50%.

*8. Raising children is an economic activity that influences and is influenced by the economy.*

When there is a choice to have children (i.e. if birth control works consistently) the decision to have children is often based on the family's degree of economic security.

Women's continued participation in the labour force after child birth depends on family income, the possibility of employment, and the availability, affordability and quality of childcare.

The quality of important services that affect children, such as education, health, recreation, and economic opportunity varies regionally and depends on the socio-economic priorities and policies of provincial, federal and local governments.

*9. Everyone has the right to economic independence.*

The basic components of economic independence are adequate shelter, food and an annual income above the poverty line.

Equality of opportunity, a basic tenet of Canadian society, implies that there be available to both men and women the same right of access to the tools that help them reach economic independence. These tools include appropriate education, job training, support services such as affordable childcare, and employment. As well, there must be understanding, acknowledgement and amelioration of the impacts of the sexual division of labour.

# WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY:

## USER GUIDE

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## USER GUIDE

This kit has several parts:

### 1. Introduction

The introduction outlines why we put this kit together and describes some of the key issues involved in our analysis of women and the economy.

### 2. Grounding Assumptions on Women and the Economy

The grounding assumptions are a starting point from which we can look at current trends and specific issues regarding women and the economy. They can be used to help groups and individuals develop their own assumptions about women and the economy or to develop further analysis and action.

### 3. Articles on Women and the Economy

Three public presentations by Women's Research Centre members are included as statements of our own perspective applied in different contexts. *The Exclusion of Women From Economic Planning* was presented to the Macdonald Commission on Canada's Future in 1983. *We Are The Exogenous Factors* was presented to the federal NDP Action Group on Jobs in 1984. *Women and the Economy* is a speech delivered in 1985 to a conference of women concerned about economic development in Northwestern Ontario.

### 4. Women and the Economy—A Reading Guide

The Reading Guide is a synopsis of literature the Women and Economy committee of the Women's Research Centre found particularly useful when looking at issues we had identified as being of interest and concern to us. These materials were helpful in developing the grounding assumptions and they continue to give direction for further work. The guide is written to give the reader useful and immediate access to specific topics.



FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

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## FOREWORD

In the mid 1980s, when British Columbia was hit with the effects of both an international recession and provincial government spending cutbacks, the Women's Research Centre continued its work of developing an analysis of women's relation to the economy—in boom times, bust times, and all points in between. We discussed many issues, including women and poverty, the impact of recession and "restraint" programs on women and families, as well as reactionary attitudes towards women and families and the reflection of those attitudes in new government policies and budgets. Part of this work included looking into the impact of recession and restraint on women in British Columbia and an intensive review of literature relating to the issues we discussed. The production of this kit on Women and the Economy is another aspect of this recent work.

The kit is a project of the Women and Economy Committee of the Women's Research Centre. It is one outcome of a period of reflection and discussion undertaken after a decade of work focusing on issues concerning women and single industry towns and the impact of mega-resource projects on women and families.

In that work the Women's Research Centre documented and described women's experience of economic development processes. It became clear to us that economic development ignored and excluded the lives and work of women and so we have tried to develop ways of including women in those processes. This work is documented in the *Northern British Columbia Women's Task Force Report On Single Industry Resource Communities (1977)*, *Beyond The Pipeline (1979)* and *A Presentation to the International Conference on the Human Side of Energy (1981)*.

The materials included in this kit will provide the reader with a perspective on the economy that first of all includes women and, second, includes all aspects of women's work—public and private, paid and unpaid.

We hope the framework for thinking about women and the economy provided here will be useful in stimulating discussion and action.

### WOMEN AND ECONOMY COMMITTEE

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## INTRODUCTION

The word "economy" alone is enough to scare many of us away from exploring the subject further. This is not surprising since so much of the current usage of the term has been intentionally limited to the spheres of business (the "marketplace") and government—separate from home and community life. The domestic lives of women have been considered exogenous (i.e. *outside* the economy) except for their role as consumers.

But these very concepts of economics are now being re-examined. "Economics" in its original Greek, is *oikonomia* and refers to the management of a household. Writers of the new economic analyses talk about the formal economy (business and state) and the informal economy (family and community). According to Ross and Usher in their book *From the Roots Up. Economic Development as if Community Mattered* (New York: Boot Strap Press, 1986, p. xii), in Canada this informal economy is considered to actually constitute about fifty per cent of economic activity. The Canadian economy can only be fully understood when all of its economic parts are understood.

The contemporary women's liberation movement has brought world attention to the situation of women and our relation to social, cultural, political and economic institutions. Action on women's equality has precipitated legislative reform, policy development and change of attitude.

But underneath the worthwhile (and still limited) gains for some women exist new trends which threaten those gains and seek to entrench women in more and worse poverty. Many of those trends combine to eliminate or drastically change women's labour force work and increase the amount and kind of work women do in the home. Issues discussed by the Women and Economy Committee in the course of this project include: the feminization of poverty; cutbacks in government services and spending and the impact on women and families; and right wing political and religious influences on women and women's issues.

Many groups are presently looking at major social and economic policy issues in Canada—women's groups, poverty groups, church groups and most political parties. We believe it is past time to examine these economic and social trends which have and will have considerable impact on women and the whole economy. It is also imperative to look at these trends from the perspective of women's experience.

The work that we have done on *the feminization of poverty* reflects in part a trend towards increased family break-ups, the continuing need for many men to take appropriate economic responsibilities for their families after divorce and separation, women's longer life span, the sexual division of labour and the low wages paid to women. When the feminization of poverty is combined with government trends toward rejection of historical responsibilities in education, social and health services we are left with society collectively rejecting the needs of single parent families, women in the labour force, older women and poor people, among others.

Feminization of poverty and related governmental policy shifts also has important impacts on the structure of the economy. Such policies cut off spending power from women—a major consumer group. Women purchase food, clothing, shelter, household

goods, use social services and generally are responsible for seeing to the education and socialization of generations to come. The poorer women are, the less they can actively take part in this aspect of the economy. The poorer women are, the more the whole economy suffers.

There are a number of issues to be discussed when one looks at *cutbacks in government services and employment and the effect on women and families*. Public sector (government) employment has paid women—a large percentage of its work force—to work professionally providing social, health, educational and administrative services. The public sector has also provided the services (such as day care, care for the elderly) which has freed women to provide not only better care for their children and parents, but has allowed women some opportunity to choose their own paid work outside the home. Therefore “restraint” in government spending cuts heavily into women’s employment as well as into the services available to women to help them do their work in the labour force, or at home.

Restraint policies also need to be understood in terms of their wider effect on women. The impact of many of these cuts is to force women into doing more unpaid caretaking—to supplement the school system and social services as volunteers, to care for the elderly and the sick as hospitals close beds and shorten patient stays. This work is done by women in addition to whatever other paid employment or unpaid work in the home they are already doing.

The family home is also increasingly becoming the bottom line for housing and feeding the unemployed...when there is a “family home,” and no matter what ages the children are. Governments are now creating policies about the “family” based on an assumption of nuclear families caring for young people up to the age of twenty-five. We have to ask how realistic this kind of family policy is in a world of single parents—in a world where one in ten Canadian women is battered in her “family relationship.”

There are many unexamined assumptions about what the family is and what role it can or should play in the economy. What we see as problematic is the fact that economists and government policy makers do not recognize the economic value of women’s work within the family, they do not consider women’s needs in doing that work, yet there is an unstated assumption on their part that the “family” actually means women.

There is a pervasive influence of what is generally called *right wing politics and policies on women and families*. The image of women held by the political and religious right is one of woman beholden to man in all aspects of her life. That man is ideally her husband, but is also the “man” represented by government and the state.

“Pro-family” is a phrase commonly used by right wing elements, but examination of actual pro-family policies reveal a bias towards rigid family roles that place women in a consistently subservient and powerless position. Feminists, long concerned about the situation of women and children within families, also claim to be pro-family, but with a focus on interdependent and non stereotypical roles within the family.

The literature reveals a specific and ferocious anti-feminist element to the ideology of the right. On examination these policies are not only anti-feminist, they are anti-women—even though the language of the policies appears to offer protection and assistance. It is critical for women to examine right wing religious and political poli-

cies and understand the power of that kind of ideology over people—especially during seemingly insecure and unsafe economic hard times.

### IN SUMMARY

This is a time when many aspects of Canadian social and economic policy are being re-shaped quickly in ways which will have considerable impact on Canadian women and children. Witnessing provincial and federal government decisions to eliminate or radically gut social programs is a sobering, angering and sometimes paralyzing process—especially when those programs were put there by social consensus and as a mark of a civilized and humane society. It is important to monitor and examine critically the changes in socio-economic policy and their impact on women.

We do this as feminists and with a sense of urgency that insists that these are not "women's issues" to be sidelined to a particular interest group. Feminists understand that women's issues are not just about certain women. Nor are they only about women. All women are situated on a continuum of impact—some may be in a more privileged place than others, but all are affected.

Looking at economic policy and development from women's perspective means starting with accounts of women's experience of what our lives are like at home and in the community. This leads to an uncovering of issues such as transportation, housing, town planning, the environment, the need for secondary and tertiary industry, as well as issues related to health, social services and employment. Women's descriptions of transportation problems in the northern community of Whitehorse led to the development and operation, by women, of a "mini-bus" public transit system. This system stands as a model of how small-scale public transit can work and is now sponsored by local governments. There are connections between economic trends and social policies in north american politics, but as one can see, it is certainly not only feminists who will be affected. The implications are far reaching and we believe a feminist perspective on economic issues can illuminate the depth of the crisis for the better understanding of everyone.